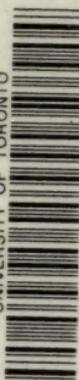


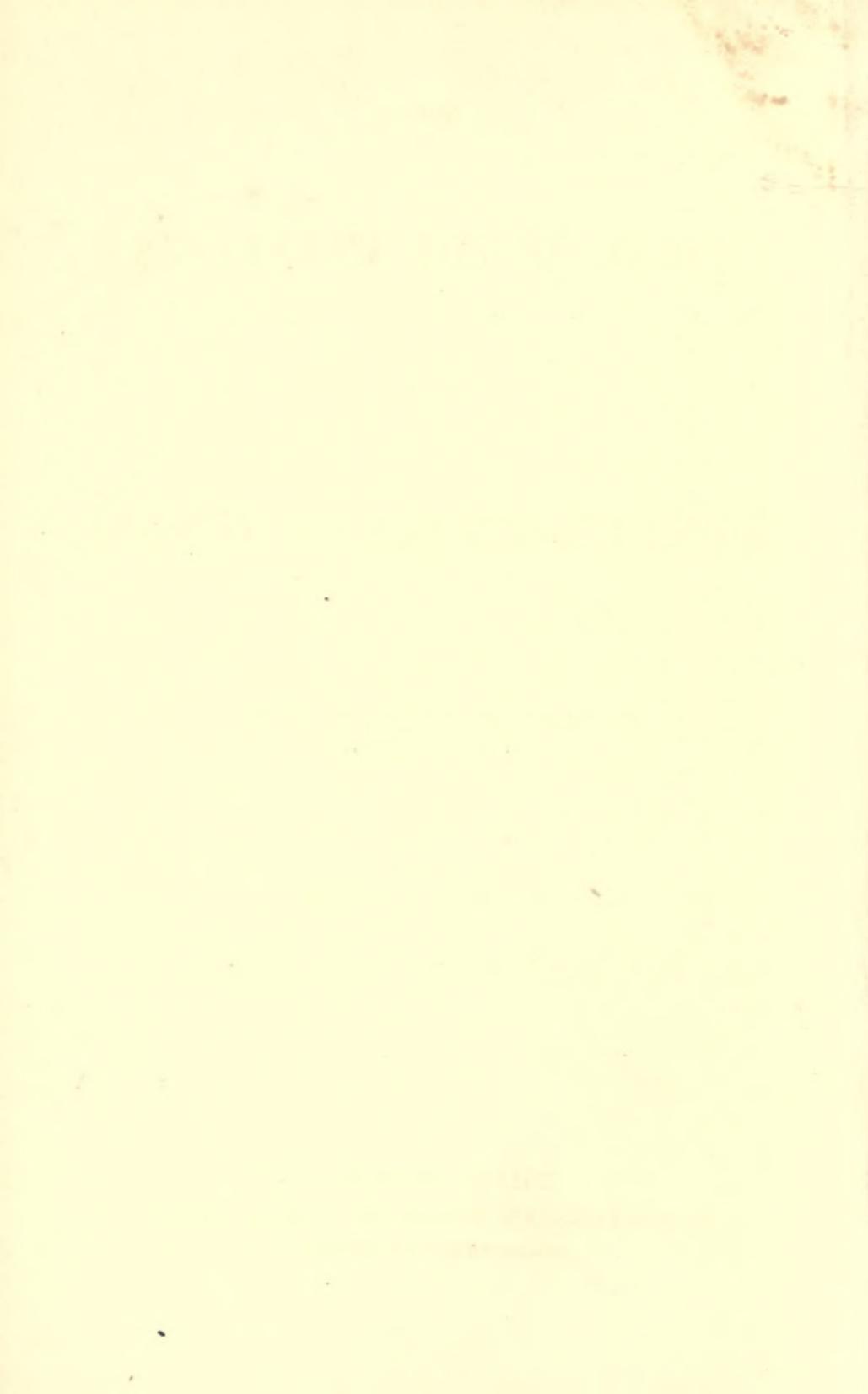
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THE

TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES

OF THE

RESURRECTION OF JESUS:

BY THOMAS SHERLOCK, D. D.

BISHOP OF LONDON.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE SEQUEL OF THE TRIAL.

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## TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES.

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WE were, not long since, some gentlemen of the Inns of Court together, each to other so well known that no man's presence was a confinement to any other from speaking his mind on any subject that happened to arise in conversation. The meeting was without design, and the discourse, as in like cases, various. Among other things we fell on the subject of Woolston's trial and conviction, which had happened some few days before. That led to a debate how the law stands in such cases; what punishment it inflicts; and in general, whether the law ought at all to interpose in controversies of this kind. We were not agreed in these points. One, who maintained the favourable side to Woolston, discovered a great liking and approbation of his discourses against the miracles of Christ, and seemed to think his arguments unanswerable. To which another replied, "I wonder that one of your abilities, and bred to the profession of the law, which teaches us to consider the nature of evidence, and its proper weight, can be of that opinion. I am sure you would be unwilling to determine a property of five shillings on such evidence as you now think material enough to overthrow the miracles of Christ."

It may easily be imagined that this opened a door to much dispute, and determined the conversation for the remainder of the evening to this subject. The dispute ran through almost all the particulars mentioned in Woolston's pieces; but the thread of it was broken by several digressions, and the pursuit of things which were brought accidentally into the discourse. At length one of the company said pleasantly, "Gentlemen, you do not argue like lawyers; if I were judge in this case, I would hold you better to the point." The company took the hint, and cried, they should be glad to have the cause reheard, and him to be the judge. The gentlemen who had engaged with mettle and spirit in a dispute which arose accidentally, seemed very unwilling to be drawn into a formal controversy; and especially the gentleman who argued against Woolston, thought the matter grew too serious for him, and excused himself from undertaking a controversy in religion, of all others the most momentous. But he was told that the argument should be confined merely to the nature of the evidence, and that might be considered without entering into any such controversy as he would avoid; and, to bring the matter within bounds, and under one view, the evidence of Christ's resurrection, and the exceptions taken to it, should be the only subject of the conference. With much persuasion he suffered himself to be persuaded, and promised to give the company and their new-made judge a meeting that day fortnight. The judge and the rest of the company were for bringing on the cause a week sooner; but the counsel for Woolston took the matter up, and said, "Consider, sir, the gentleman is not to argue out of Littleton, Plowden, or Coke, authors to him well known, but he must have his authori-

ties from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and a fortnight is little enough time of all conscience to gain a familiarity with a new acquaintance;" and, turning to the gentleman, he said, "I will call on you before the fortnight is out, to see how reverend an appearance you make behind Hammond on the New Testament, a concordance on one hand, and a folio Bible with references on the other." "You shall be welcome, sir," replied the gentleman; "and perhaps you may find some company more to your own taste. He is but a poor counsel who studies one side of the question only; and therefore, I will have your friends Woolston, Tindal, and Collins, to entertain you when you do me the favour of the visit."

On this we parted in good humour, and all pleased with the appointment made, except the two gentlemen who were to provide the entertainment.

Next day the company met at the time appointed; but it happened in this, as in like cases it often does, that some friends to some of the company, who were not of the party the first day, had got notice of the meeting; and the gentlemen who were to debate the question, found they had a more numerous audience than they expected or desired. He especially, who was to maintain the evidence of the resurrection, began to excuse the necessity he was under of disappointing their expectation, alleging that he was not prepared, and he had persisted in excusing himself, but that the strangers who perceived what the case was, offered to withdraw, which the gentleman would by no means consent to. They insisting to go, he said he would much rather submit himself to their candour, unprepared as he was, than be guilty of so much rudeness as to force them to leave the company. On

which one of the company, smiling, said, "It happens luckily that our number is increased: when we were last together, we appointed a judge, but we quite forgot a jury; and now, I think, we are good men and true, sufficient to make one." This thought was pursued in several allusions to legal proceedings, which created some mirth, and had this good effect, that it dispersed the solemn air which the mutual compliments on the difficulty before mentioned had introduced, and restored the ease and good humour natural to the conversation of gentlemen.

The judge perceiving the disposition of the company, thought it a proper time to begin, and called out, "Gentlemen of the jury, take your places;" and immediately seated himself at the upper end of the table. The company sat round him, and the judge called on the counsel for Woolston to begin.

*Mr. A.*, counsel for Woolston, addressing himself to the judge, said,—“May it please your lordship, I conceive the gentleman on the other side ought to begin, and lay his evidence, which he intends to maintain, before the court; till that is done, it is to no purpose for me to object. I may perhaps object to something which he will not admit to be any part of his evidence; and therefore I apprehend the evidence ought in the first place to be distinctly stated.

*Judge.* Mr. B., what say you to that?

*Mr. B.*, counsel on the other side,—My lord, if the evidence I am to maintain were to support any new claim—if I were to gain anything which I am not already possessed of—the gentleman would be in the right; but the evidence is old, and is matter of record; and I have been long in possession of all that I claim under it. If the

gentleman has anything to say to dispossess me, let him produce it; otherwise I have no reason to bring my own title into question. And this I take to be the known method of proceeding in such cases; no man is obliged to produce his title to his possession; it is sufficient if he maintains it when it is called in question.

*Mr. A.* Surely, my lord, the gentleman mistakes the case. I can never admit myself to be out of possession of my understanding and reason, and since he would put me out of this possession, and compel me to admit things incredible, in virtue of the evidence he maintains, he ought to set forth his claim, or leave the world to be directed by common sense.

*Judge.* Sir, you say right, on supposition that the truth of the Christian religion were the point in judgment. In that case it would be necessary to produce the evidence for the Christian religion. But the matter now before the court is, whether the objections produced by Mr. Woolston, are of weight to overthrow the evidence of Christ's resurrection? You see then the evidence of the resurrection is supposed to be what it is on both sides; and the thing immediately in judgment is the value of the objections, and therefore they must be set forth. The court will be bound to take notice of the evidence, which is admitted as a fact on both parts. Go on Mr. A.

*Mr. A.* My lord, I submit to the direction of the court. I cannot but observe, that the gentleman on the other side, unwilling as he seems to be to state his evidence, did not forget to lay in his claim to prescription; which is perhaps, in truth, though he has too much skill to own it, the very strength of his cause. I do allow, that the gentleman maintains nothing, but what his father and

grandfather, and his ancestors, beyond time of man's memory, maintained before him; I allow, too, that prescription in many cases makes a good title, but it must always be with this condition, that the thing is capable of being prescribed for; and I insist, that prescription cannot run against reason and common sense. Customs may be pleaded by prescription; but if, upon showing the custom, anything unreasonable appears in it, the prescription fails; for length of time works nothing towards the establishing anything that could never have a legal commencement. And if this objection will overthrow all prescriptions for customs, the mischief of which extends perhaps to one poor village only, and affects them in no greater a concern than their right of common on a ragged mountain, shall it not much more prevail, when the interest of mankind is concerned, and in no less a point than his happiness in this life, and in all his hopes for futurity? Besides, if prescription must be allowed in this case, how will you deal with it in others? What will you say to the ancient Persians, and their fire altars? nay, what to the Turks, who have been long enough in possession of their faith to plead——

*Mr. B.* I beg pardon for interrupting the gentleman. But it is to save him trouble. He is going into his favourite commonplace, and has brought us from Persia to Turkey already; and if he goes on, I know we must follow him round the globe. To save us from this long journey, I will wave all advantage from the antiquity of the resurrection, and the general reception the belief of it has found in the world; and am content to consider it as a fact which happened but last year, and was never heard of either by the gentleman's grandfather, or by mine.

*Mr. A.* I should not have taken quite so long a journey as the gentleman imagines ; nor, indeed, need any man go far from home to find instances to the purpose I was on. But, since this advantage is quitted, I am as willing to spare my pains, as the gentleman is desirous that I should. And yet I suspect some art even in this concession, fair and candid as it seems to be. For I am persuaded that one reason, perhaps the main reason, why men believe this history of Jesus, is, that they cannot conceive that any one should attempt, much less succeed in such an attempt as this, on the foundation of mere human cunning and policy ; and it is worth the while to go round the globe, as the gentleman expressed himself, to see various instances of the like kind, in order to remove this prejudice. But I stand corrected, and will go directly to the point now in judgment.

*Mr. B.* My lord, the gentleman, in justification of his first argument, has entered on another of a very different kind. I think he is sensible of it, and seeming to yield up one of his popular topics, is indeed artfully getting rid of another, which has made a very good figure in many late writings, but will not bear in any place where he who maintains it may be asked questions. The mere antiquity of the resurrection I gave up ; for, if the evidence was not good at first, it cannot be good now. The gentleman is willing, he says, to spare us his history of ancient errors, and intimates that on this account he passes over many instances of fraud that were like in circumstances to the case before us. By no means, my lord, let them be passed over. I would not have the main strength of his cause betrayed in complaisance to me. Nothing can be more material than to show a fraud of this kind, that

prevailed universally in the world. Christ Jesus declared himself a prophet, and put the proof of his mission on this, that he should die openly and publicly, and rise again the third day. This surely was the hardest plot in the world to be managed ; and if there be one instance of this kind, or in any degree like it, by all means let it be produced.

*Mr. A.* My lord, there has hardly been an instance of a false religion in the world, but it has also afforded a like instance to this before us. Have they not all pretended to inspiration ? Upon what foot did Pythagoras, Numa, and others, set up ? Did they not all converse with the gods, and pretend to deliver oracles ?

*Mr. B.* This only shows that revelation is by the common consent of mankind the very best foundation of religion ; and therefore every impostor pretends to it. But is a man's hiding himself in a cave for some years, and then coming out into the world, to be compared to a man's dying, and rising to life again ? So far from it, that you and I, and every man, may do the one, but no man can do the other.

*Mr. A.* Sir, I suppose it will be allowed to be as great a thing to go to heaven, and converse with angels, and with God, and to come down to the earth again, as it is to die and rise again. Now, this very thing Mahomet pretended to do ; and all his disciples believe it. Can you deny this fact ?

*Mr. B.* Deny it, sir ? No. But tell us who went with Mahomet ? Who were his witnesses ? I expect, before we have done, to hear of the guards set over the sepulchre of Christ, and the seal of the stone. What guard watched Mahomet in his going or returning ? What seals and cre-

dentials had he? He himself pretends to none. His followers pretend to nothing but his own word. We are now to consider the evidence of Christ's resurrection, and you think to parallel it, by producing a case for which no one ever pretended there was any evidence. You have Mahomet's word; and no man ever told a lie, but you had his word for the truth of what he said: and therefore you need not go round the globe to find such instances as these. But this story, it is said, has gained great credit, and is received by many nations. Very well. And how was it received? Was not every man converted to this faith with the sword at his throat? In our case, every witness to the resurrection, and every believer of it, was hourly exposed to death. In the other case, whoever refused to believe, died; or, what was as bad, lived a wretched, conquered slave. And will you pretend these cases to be alike? One case, indeed, there was, within our own memory, which, in some circumstances, came near to the case now before us. The French prophets put the credit of their mission on the resurrection of Dr. Emmes, and gave public notice of it. If the gentleman pleases to make use of this instance it is at his service.

*Mr. A.* The instance of Dr. Emmes is so far to the purpose, that it shows to what lengths enthusiasm will carry men. And why might not the same thing happen at Jerusalem, which happened but a few years ago in our own country? Matthew and John, and the rest of them, managed that affair with more dexterity than the French prophets; so that the resurrection of Jesus gained credit in the world, and the French prophets sunk under their ridiculous pretensions. That is all the difference.

*Mr. B.* Is it so? And a very wide difference, I pro-

mise you. In one case, every thing happened that was proper to convince the world of the truth of the resurrection; in the other, the event manifested the cheat: and on the view of these circumstances, you think it sufficient to say, with great coolness, that is all the difference. Why, what difference do you expect between truth and falsehood? What distinction—

*Judge.* Gentlemen, you forget that you are in a court, and are falling into dialogue. Courts do not allow of chit-chat. Look ye, the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus is before the court, recorded by Matthew, Mark, and others. You must take it as it is; you can neither make it better nor worse. These witnesses are accused of giving false evidence. Come to the point; and let us hear what you have to offer to prove the accusation.

*Mr. B.* Is it your meaning, sir, that the objections should be stated and argued all together, and that the answer should be to the whole at once? or would you have the objections argued singly, and answered separately by themselves?

*Judge.* I think this court may dispense with the strict forms of legal proceedings; and therefore I leave this to the choice of the jury.

After the jury had consulted together, the foreman rose up.

*The Foreman of the Jury.* We desire to hear the objections argued and answered separately. We shall be better able to form a judgment by hearing the answer whilst the objection is fresh in our minds.

*Judge.* Gentlemen, you hear the opinion of the jury. Go on.

*Mr. A.* I am now to disclose to you a scene, of all

others, the most surprising. "The resurrection has been long talked of, and, to the amazement of every one who can think freely, has been believed through all ages of the Church."\* This general and constant belief creates in most minds a presumption that it was founded on good evidence. In other cases the evidence supports the credit of the history; but here the evidence itself is presumed only on the credit which the story has gained. I wish the books dispersed against Jesus by the ancient Jews had not been lost, for they would have given us a clear insight into this contrivance;† but it is happy for us that the very account given by the pretended witnesses of this fact, is sufficient to destroy the credit of it.

The resurrection was not a thing contrived for its own sake. No! it was undertaken to support great views, and for the sake of great consequences that were to attend it. It will be necessary, therefore, to lay before you those views, that you may the better judge of this part of the contrivance, when you have the whole scene before you.

The Jews were a weak, superstitious people, and, as is common among such people, gave great credit to some traditionary prophecies about their own country. They had, besides, some old books among them, which they esteemed to be writings of certain prophets who had formerly lived among them, and whose memory they had in great veneration. From such old books and traditions they formed many extravagant expectations; and among the rest one was, that some time or other a great victorious prince should rise among them, and subdue all their enemies, and make them lords of the world. In Augustus's

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\* Sixth Discourse, p. 17.

† Ibid. p. 4.

time they were in a low state, reduced under the Roman yoke; and as they never wanted a deliverer more, so the eagerness of this hope, as it happens to weak minds, turned into a firm expectation that he would soon come.\* This proved a temptation to some bold, and to some cunning men, to personate the prince so much expected. And "nothing is more natural and common to promote rebellions, than to ground them on new prophecies, or new interpretations of old ones; prophecies being suited to the vulgar superstition, and operating with the force of religion."† Accordingly, many such impostors arose, pretending to be the victorious prince expected; and they, and the people who followed them, perished in the folly of their attempt.

But Jesus, knowing that victories and triumphs are not things to be counterfeited, that the people were not to be delivered from the Roman yoke by sleight of hand, and having no hope of being able to cope with the Emperor of Rome in good earnest, took another and more successful method to carry on his design. He took upon him to be the prince foretold in the ancient prophets; but then he insisted that the true sense of the prophecies had been mistaken; that they related not to the kingdoms of this world, but to the kingdom of heaven; that the Messiah was not to be a conquering prince, but a suffering one; that he was not to come with horses of war, and chariots of war, but was to be meek and lowly, and riding on an ass. By this means he got the common and necessary foundation for a new revelation, which is to be built and founded on a precedent revelation.‡

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\* See Scheme of Literal Prophecy, p. 26.

† Ibid. p. 27.

‡ See Discourse of the Grounds, &c. ch. iv.

To carry on this design, he made choice of twelve men of no fortunes or education, and of such understandings as gave no jealousy that they would discover the plot. And, what is most wonderful, and shows their ability, whilst the master was preaching the kingdom of heaven, these poor men, not weaned from the prejudices of their country, expected every day that he would declare himself a king, and were quarreling who should be his first minister. This expectation had a good effect on the service, for it kept them constant to their master.

I must observe further, that the Jews were under strange apprehensions of supernatural powers; and as their own religion was founded on the belief of certain miracles said to be wrought by their lawgiver Moses, so were they ever running after wonders and miracles, and ready to take up with any stories of this kind. Now, as something extraordinary was necessary to support the pretensions of Jesus, he dexterously laid hold on this weakness of the people, and set up to be a wonder-worker. His disciples were well qualified to receive this impression; they saw, or thought they saw, many strange things, and were able to spread the fame and report of them abroad.

This conduct had the desired success. The whole country was alarmed, and full of the news of a great prophet's being come among them. They were too full of their own imagination to attend to the notion of a kingdom of heaven. Here was one mighty in deed and in word; and they concluded he was the very prince their nation expected. Accordingly they once attempted to set him up for a king, and at another time attended him in triumph to Jerusalem. This natural consequence opens

the natural design of the attempt. If things had gone on successfully to the end, it is probable the kingdom of heaven would have been changed into a kingdom of this world. The design indeed failed by the impatience and overhastiness of the multitude, which alarmed not only the chief of the Jews, but the Roman governor also.

The case being come to this point, Jesus, seeing that he could not escape being put to death, declared that the ancient prophets had foretold that the Messias should die upon a cross, and that he should rise again on the third day. Here was the foundation laid for the continuing this plot, which otherwise had died with its author. This was his legacy to his followers; which, having been well managed by them and their successors, has at last produced a kingdom indeed; a kingdom of priests, who have governed the world for many ages, and have been strong enough to set kings and emperors at defiance. But so it happens, the ancient prophets appealed to are still extant; and there being no such prophecies of the death and resurrection of the Messias, they are a standing evidence against this story. As he expected, so it happened, that he died on a cross; and the prosecuting of this contrivance was left to the management of his disciples and followers. Their part is next to be considered——

*Mr. B.* My lord, since it is your opinion that the objections should be considered singly, and the gentleman has carried his scheme down to the death of Christ, I think he has come to a proper rest; and that it is agreeable to your intention that I should be admitted to answer.

*Judge.* You say right, sir. Let us hear what you answer to this charge.

*Mr. B.* My lord, I was unwilling to disturb the gen-

tleman by breaking in on his scheme ; otherwise I should have reminded him, that this court sits to examine evidence, and not to be entertained with fine imaginations. You have had a scheme laid before you, but not one bit of evidence to support any part of it ; no, not so much as a pretence to any evidence. The gentleman, I remember, was very sorry that the old books of the Jews were lost, which would, as he supposes, have set forth all this matter ; and I agree with him that he has much reason to be sorry, considering his great scarcity of proof. And since I have mentioned this, that I may not have to return to it again, I would ask the gentleman now, how he knows there ever were such books. And since, if ever there were any, they are lost, how he knows what they contained. I doubt I shall have frequent occasion to ask such questions. It would indeed be a sufficient answer to the whole, to repeat the several suppositions that have been made, and to call for the evidence on which they stand. This would plainly discover every part of the story to be mere fiction. But since the gentleman seems to have endeavoured to bring under one view the many insinuations which have of late been spread abroad by different hands, to work the whole into a consistent scheme, I will, if your patience shall permit, examine this plot, and see to whom the honour of the contrivance belongs.

The gentleman begins with expressing his "amazement, that the resurrection has been believed in all ages of the church." If you ask him why, he must answer, because the account of it is a forgery ; for it is no amazement to him, surely, that a true account should be generally well received. So that this remark proceeds indeed

from confidence rather than amazement; and comes only to this, that he is sure there was no resurrection. And I am sure this is no evidence that there was none. Whether he is mistaken in his confidence, or I in mine, the court must judge.

The gentleman's observation, that the general belief of the resurrection creates a presumption that it stands on good evidence, and therefore people look no further, but follow their fathers, as their fathers did their grandfathers before them, is in great measure true; but it is a truth nothing to his purpose. He allows that the resurrection has been believed in all ages of the church; that is, from the very time of the resurrection: what then prevailed with those who first received it? They certainly did not follow the example of their fathers. Here then is the point—how did this fact gain credit in the world at first? Credit it has gained without doubt. If the multitude at present go into this belief through prejudice, example, and for company's sake, they do in this case no more, nor otherwise than they do in all cases. And it cannot be denied, but that truth may be received through prejudice, (as it is called,) that is, without examining the proof or merits of the cause, as well as falsehood. What general truth is there, the merits of which all the world, or the hundredth part has examined? It is smartly said somewhere, that the priest only continues what the nurse began. But the life of the remark consists in the quaintness of the antithesis between the *nurse* and the *priest*; and owes its support much more to sound than to sense. For is it possible that children should not hear something of the common and popular opinions of their country, whether those opinions be true or false? Do they not

learn the common maxims of reason this way? Perhaps every man first learned from his nurse that two and two make four; and whenever she divides an apple among her children, she instills into them this prejudice, that the whole is equal to its parts, and all the parts equal to the whole; and yet Sir Isaac Newton, (shame on him!) what work has he made, what a building has he erected on the foundation of this nursery-learning! As to religion, there never was a religion, there never will be one, whether true or false, publicly owned in any country, but children have heard, and ever will hear, more or less of it from those who are placed about them. And if this is, and ever must be the case, whether the religion be true or false, it is highly absurd to lay stress on this observation, when the question is about the truth of any religion; for the observation is indifferent to both sides of the question.

We are now, I think, got through the commonplace learning which must for ever, it seems, attend on questions of this nature, and are coming to the merits of the cause.

And here the gentleman on the other side thought proper to begin with an account of the people of the Jews, the people in whose country the fact is laid, and who were originally, and in some respects, principally concerned in its consequences.

They were, he says, a weak, superstitious people, and lived under the influence of certain pretended prophecies and predictions; that on this ground they had, some time before the appearance of Christ Jesus, conceived great expectations of the coming of a victorious prince, who should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and make them

all kings and princes. He goes on then to observe, how liable the people were, in this state of things, to be imposed on and led into rebellion, by any one who was bold enough to take on him to personate the prince expected. He observes further, that in fact many such impostors did arise, and deceived multitudes to their ruin and destruction.

I have laid these things together, because I do not intend to dispute these matters with the gentleman. Whether the Jews were a weak and superstitious people, and influenced by false prophecies, or whether they had true prophecies among them, is not material to the present question ; it is enough for the gentleman's argument, if I allow the fact to be as he has stated it, that they did expect a victorious prince ; that they were on this account exposed to be practised on by pretenders, and in fact were often so deluded.

This foundation being laid, it was natural to expect, and I believe your lordship and every one present did expect, that the gentleman would go on to show that Jesus laid hold of this opportunity, struck in with the opinion of the people, and professed himself to be the prince who was to work their deliverance. But so far, it seems, is this from being the case, that the charge on Jesus is, that he took the contrary part, and set up in opposition to all the popular notions and prejudices of his country ; that he interpreted the prophecies to another sense and meaning than his countrymen did ; and by his expositions took away all hopes of their ever seeing the victorious deliverer so much wanted and expected.

I know not how to bring the gentleman's premises and his conclusion to any agreement ; they seem to be at a

great variance at present. If it be the likeliest method for an impostor to succeed, to build on the popular opinions, prejudices, and prophecies of the people; then surely an impostor cannot possibly take a worse method, than to set up in opposition to all the prejudices and prophecies of the country. Where was the art and cunning then of taking this method? Could anything be expected from it but hatred, contempt, and persecution? And did Christ in fact meet with any other treatment from the Jews? And yet when he found, as the gentleman allows he did, that he must perish in this attempt, did he change his note? Did he come about, and drop any intimations agreeable to the notions of the people? It is not pretended. This, which, in any other case which ever happened, would be taken to be a plain mark of great honesty, or great stupidity, or of both, is in the present case art, policy, and contrivance!

But, it seems, Jesus dared not set up to be the victorious prince expected, for victories are not to be counterfeited. I hope it was no crime in him that he did not assume this false character, and try to abuse the credulity of the people: if he had done so, it certainly would have been a crime; and therefore in this point at least he is innocent. I do not suppose the gentleman imagines that the Jews were well founded in their expectation of a temporal prince: and therefore when Christ opposed this conceit at the manifest hazard of his life, as he certainly had truth on his side, so the presumption is, that it was for the sake of truth that he exposed himself.

No. He wanted, we are told, the common and necessary foundation for a new revelation, the authority of an old one to build on. Very well. I will not inquire how

common, or how necessary this foundation is to a new revelation ; for, be that case as it will, it is evident that in the method Christ took, he had not, nor could have the supposed advantage of such foundation. For why is this foundation necessary ? A friend of the gentleman's shall tell you, " Because it must be difficult, if not impossible, to introduce among men (who in all civilized countries are bred up in the belief of some revealed religion) a revealed religion wholly new, or such as has no reference to a preceding one ; for that would be to combat all men on too many respects, and not to proceed on a sufficient number of principles necessary to be assented to by those on whom the first impressions of a new religion are proposed to be made."\* You see now the reason of the necessity of this foundation : it is, that the new teacher may have the advantage of old popular opinions, and fix himself on the prejudices of the people. Had Christ any such advantages ? or did he seek any such ? The people expected a victorious prince ; he told them they were mistaken : they held as sacred the traditions of the elders ; he told them those traditions made the law of God of none effect : they valued themselves for being the peculiar people of God ; he told them, that people from all quarters of the world should be the people of God, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom : they thought God could be worshipped only at Jerusalem ; he told them God might and should be worshipped every where : they were superstitious in the observance of the Sabbath ; he, according to their reckoning, broke it frequently : in a word, their washings of hands

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\* Discourse of the Grounds, p. 24.

and pots, their superstitious distinctions of meats, their prayers in public, their villanies in secret, were all re-proved, exposed, and condemned by him; and the cry ran strongly against him, that he came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. And now, sir, what advantage had Christ, of your common and necessary foundation? What sufficient number of principles owned by the people did he build on? If he adhered to the old revelation in the true sense, or (which is sufficient to the present argument) in a sense not received by the people, it was in truth the greatest difficulty he had to struggle with: and therefore what could tempt him, but purely a regard to truth, to take on himself so many difficulties, which might have been avoided, could he have been but silent as to the old revelation, and left the people to their imaginations?

To carry on this plot, we are told, that the next thing which Jesus did was to make choice of proper persons to be his disciples. The gentleman has given us their character; but, as I suppose he has more employment for them before he has done, I desire to defer the consideration of their abilities and conduct till I hear what work he has for them to do. I would only observe, that thus far this plot differs from all that ever I heard of. Impostors generally take advantage of the prejudices of the people; generally too they make choice of cunning, dexterous fellows to manage under them; but in this case Jesus opposed all the notions of the people, and made choice of simpletons, it seems, to conduct his contrivances.

But what design, what real end was carrying on all this while? Why, the gentleman tells us, the very thing disclaimed, the temporal kingdom, was the real thing

aimed at under this disguise. He told the people there was no foundation to expect a temporal deliverer, warned them against all who should set up those pretensions ; he declared there was no ground from the ancient prophecies to expect such a prince ; and yet by these very means he was working his way to an opportunity of declaring himself to be the very prince the people wanted. We are still on the marvellous ; every step opens new wonders. I blame not the gentleman ; for what but this can be imagined to give any account of these measures imputed to Christ ? Be this never so unlikely, yet this is the only thing that can be said. Had Christ been charged with enthusiasm, it would not have been necessary to assign a reason for his conduct : madness is unaccountable. But when design, cunning, and fraud are made the charge, and carried to such a height as to suppose him to be a party to the contrivance of a sham resurrection for himself, it is necessary to say to what end this cunning tended. It was, we are told, to a kingdom ; and indeed the temptation was little enough, considering that the chief conductor of the plot was to be crucified for his pains. But were the means made use of at all probable to attain the end ? Yes, says the gentleman, that cannot be disputed ; for they had really this effect, the people would have made him king. Very well : why was he not king then ? Why, it happened unluckily that he would not accept the offer, but withdrew himself from the multitude, and lay concealed till they were dispersed. It will be said perhaps, that Jesus was a better judge of affairs than the people, and saw it was not yet time to accept the offer. Be it so : let us see then what follows.

The government was alarmed, and Jesus was looked on

as a person dangerous to the state ; and he had discernment enough to see that his death was determined and inevitable. What does he do then ? Why, to make the best of a bad case, and to save the benefit of his undertaking to those who were to succeed him, he pretends to prophesy of his death, which he knew could not be avoided ; and further, that he should rise again the third day. Men do not use to play tricks in the article of death ; but this plot had nothing common, nothing in the ordinary way. But what if it should appear, that after the foretelling of his death (through despair of his fortunes it is said) he had it in his power to set up for king once more, and once more refused the opportunity ? Men in despair lay hold on the least help, and never refuse the greatest. Now, the case was really so. After he had foretold his crucifixion, he came to Jerusalem in the triumphant manner the gentleman mentioned ; the people strewed his way with boughs and flowers, and were all at his devotion ; the Jewish governors lay still for fear of the people. Why was not this opportunity laid hold on to seize the kingdom, or at least to secure himself from the ignominious death he expected ? For whose sake was he contented to die ? for whose sake did he contrive this plot of the resurrection ? Wife and children he had none ; his nearest relatives gave little credit to him ; his disciples were not fit even to be trusted with the secret, nor capable to manage any advantage that could arise from it. However, the gentleman tells us, a kingdom has arisen out of this plot, a kingdom of priests. But when did it arise ? Some hundred years after the death of Christ, in opposition to his will, and almost to the subversion of his religion. And yet we are told this kingdom was the thing he had

in view. I am apt to think the gentleman is persuaded that the dominion he complains of is contrary to the spirit of the gospel ; I am sure some of his friends have taken great pains to prove it so. How then can it be charged as the intention of the gospel to introduce it ? Whatever the case was, it cannot surely be suspected that Christ died to make Popes and Cardinals. The alterations which have happened in the doctrines and practices of churches, since the Christian religion was settled by those who had an authentic commission to settle it, are quite out of the question, when the inquiry is about the truth of the Christian religion. Christ and his apostles did not vouch for the truth of all that should be taught in the church in future times ; nay, they foretold and forewarned the world against such corrupt teachers. It is therefore absurd to challenge the religion of Christ because of the corruptions which have spread amongst Christians. The gospel has no more concern with them, and ought no more to be charged with them, than with the doctrines of the Koran.

There is but one observation more, I think, which the gentleman made under this head. Jesus, he says, referred to the authority of ancient prophecies to prove that the Messiah was to die and rise again : the ancient books referred to are extant, and no such prophecies, he says, are to be found. Now, whether the gentleman can find these prophecies or no, is not material to the present question. It is allowed that Christ foretold his own death and resurrection ; if the resurrection was managed by fraud, Christ was certainly in the fraud himself, by foretelling the fraud that was to happen : disprove therefore the resurrection, and we shall have no further occasion

for prophecy. On the other side, by foretelling the resurrection, he certainly put the proof of his mission on the truth of the event. Whether it be the character of the Messiah in the ancient prophets or no, that he should die and rise again, without doubt Jesus is not the Messiah, if he did not rise again; for, by his own prophecy, he made it part of the character of the Messiah. If the event justified the prediction, it is such an evidence as no man of sense and reason can reject. One would naturally think, that the foretelling his resurrection, and giving such public notice to expect it, that his keenest enemies were fully apprised of it, carried with it the greatest mark of sincere dealing. It stands thus far clear of the suspicion of fraud. And had it proceeded from enthusiasm, and an heated imagination, the dead body at least would have rested in the grave, and without further evidence have confuted such pretensions: and since the dead body was not only carried openly to the grave, but there watched and guarded, and yet could never afterwards be found, never heard of more as a dead body, there must of necessity have been either a real miracle, or a great fraud in this case. Enthusiasm dies with the man, and has no operation on his dead body. There is therefore here no medium; you must either admit the miracle, or prove the fraud.

*Judge. Mr. A.* you are at liberty either to reply to what has been said under this head, or to go on with your cause.

*Mr. A.* My lord, the observations I laid before you were but introductory to the main evidences on which the merits of the case must rest. The gentleman concluded, that here must be a real miracle or a great fraud; a fraud,

he means, to which Jesus in his lifetime was a party. There is, he says, no medium. I beg his pardon. Why might it not be an enthusiasm in the master which occasioned the prediction, and fraud in the servants who put it in execution.

*Mr. B.* My lord, this is new matter, and not a reply. The gentleman opened this transaction as a fraud from one end to the other. Now he supposes Christ to have been an honest, poor enthusiast, and the disciples alone to be cheats.

*Judge.* Sir, if you go to new matter, the counsel on the other side must be admitted to answer.

*Mr. A.* My lord, I have no such intention. I was observing, that the account I gave of Jesus was only to introduce the evidence that is to be laid before the court. It cannot be expected, that I should know all the secret designs of this contrivance, especially considering that we have but short accounts of this affair, and those too conveyed to us through hands of friends and parties to the plot. In such a case it is enough if we can imagine what the views probably were; and in such case too it must be very easy for a gentleman of parts to raise contrary imaginations, and to argue plausibly from them. But the gentleman has rightly observed, that if the resurrection be a fraud, there is an end of all pretensions, good or bad, that were to be supported by it: therefore I shall go on to prove this fraud, which is one main part of the cause now to be determined.

I beg leave to remind you that Jesus in his lifetime foretold his death, and that he should rise again on the third day. The first part of his prediction was accomplished: he died on the cross, and was buried. I will not

trouble you with the particulars of his crucifixion, death, and burial : it is a well known story.

*Mr. B.* My lord, I desire to know whether the gentleman charges any fraud on this part of the history. Perhaps he may be of opinion, by and by, that there was a sleight of hand in the crucifixion, and that Christ only counterfeited death.

*Mr. A.* No, no ; have no such fears ; he was not crucified by his disciples, but by the Romans and the Jews ; and they were in very good earnest. I will prove beyond contradiction, that the dead body was fairly laid in the tomb, and the tomb sealed up ; and it will be well for you if you can get it as fairly out again.

*Judge.* Go on with your evidence.

*Mr. A.* My lord, the crucifixion being over, the dead body was conveyed to a sepulchre ; and in the general opinion there seemed to be an end of the whole design. But the governors of the Jews, watchful for the safety of the people, called to mind that Jesus in his lifetime had said that he would rise again on the third day. It may at first sight seem strange that they should give any attention to such a prophecy ; a prophecy big with confidence and presumption, and which to the common sense of mankind carried its confutation along with it ; and “ there is no other nation in the world which would not have slighted such a vain prognostication of a known impostor.” But they had warning to be watchful. It was not long before that the people “ had like to have been fatally deluded and imposed on by him, in the pretended resuscitation of Lazarus.” They had fully discovered the cheat in the case of Lazarus, and had narrowly escaped the dangerous consequences of it. And though Jesus was

dead, yet he had many disciples and followers alive, who were ready enough to combine in any fraud, to verify the prediction of their master. Should they succeed, the rulers foresaw the consequences in this case would be more fatal than those which before they had narrowly escaped. Upon this account they addressed themselves to the Roman governor, told him how the case was, and desired that he would grant them a guard to watch the sepulchre; that the service would not be long, for the prediction limited the resurrection to the third day; and when that was over, the soldiers might be released from the duty. Pilate granted the request, and a guard was set to watch the sepulchre

This was not all. The chief priests took another method to prevent all frauds, and it was the best that possibly could be taken, which was to seal up the door of the sepulchre. To understand to what purpose this caution was used, you need only consider what is intended by sealing up doors, and boxes, or writings. Is it not for the satisfaction of all parties concerned, that they may be sure things are in the state they left them, when they come and find their seals not injured? This was the method used by Darius, when Daniel was cast into the lions' den; he sealed the door of the den. And for what purpose? Was it not to satisfy himself and his court, that no art had been used to preserve Daniel? And when he came and saw Daniel safe, and his own seal untouched, he was satisfied. And indeed if we consider the thing rightly, a seal thus used imports a covenant. If you deliver writings to a person sealed, and he accepts them so, your delivery and his acceptance implies a covenant between you, that the writings shall be delivered, and the

seal whole ; and should the seal be broken, it would be a manifest fraud, and breach of trust. Nay, so strongly is this covenant implied, that there needs no special agreement in the case ; it is a compact which men are put under by the law of nations, and the common consent of mankind. When you send a letter sealed to the post-office, you have not indeed a special agreement with all persons through whose hands it passes, that it shall not be opened by any hand, but his only to whom it is directed ; yet men know themselves to be under this restraint, and that it is unlawful and dishonourable to transgress it.

Since, then, the sepulchre was sealed ; since the seal imported a covenant, consider who were the parties to this covenant. They could be no other than the chief priests on one side, the apostles on the other. To prove this, no special agreement need be shown. On one side, there was a concern to see the prediction fulfilled ; on the other, to prevent fraud in fulfilling it. The sum of their agreement was naturally this, that the seals should be opened at the time appointed for the resurrection, that all parties might see and be satisfied, whether the dead body was come to life or no.

What now would any reasonable man expect from these circumstances ? Do not you expect to hear that the chief priests and the apostles met at the time appointed, opened the seals, and that the matter in dispute was settled beyond all controversy one way or other ? But see how it happened. The seals were broken, the body stolen away in the night by the disciples, none of the chief priests present, or summoned to see the seals opened. The guards, when examined, were forced to confess the truth, though joined with an acknowledgment of their

guilt, which made them liable to be punished by Pilate ; they confessed that they were asleep, and in the meantime that the body was stolen away by the disciples.

This evidence of the Roman soldiers, and the far stronger evidence arising from the clandestine manner of breaking up the seals, are sufficient proofs of fraud.

But there is another circumstance in the case of equal weight. Though the seals did not prevent the cheat entirely, yet they effectually falsified the prediction. According to the prediction, Jesus was to rise on the third day, or after the third day. At this time the chief priests intended to be present, and probably would have been attended by a great multitude. This made it impossible to play any tricks at that time, and therefore the apostles were forced to hasten the plot ; and accordingly the resurrection happened a day before its time, for the body was buried on the Friday, and was gone early in the morning of Sunday.

These are plain facts ; facts drawn from the accounts given us by those who are friends to the belief of the resurrection. The gentleman will not call these imaginations, or complain that I have given him schemes instead of evidence.

*Mr. B.* My lord, I am now to consider that part of the argument on which the gentleman lays the greatest stress. He has given us his evidence, mere evidence, he says, unmixed, and clear of all schemes and imaginations. In one thing indeed he has been as good as his word ; he has proved beyond contradiction, that Christ died, and was laid in the sepulchre ; for without doubt, when the Jews sealed the stone, they took care to see that the body was there ; otherwise their precaution was useless. He has

proved, too, that the prediction of Christ concerning his own resurrection was a thing publicly known in all Jerusalem; for he owns that this gave occasion for all the care that was taken to prevent fraud. If this open prediction implies a fraudulent design, the evidence is strong with the gentleman; but if it shall appear to be, what it really was, the greatest mark that could be given of sincerity and plain dealing in the whole affair, the evidence will be still as strong, but the weight of it will fall on the wrong side for the gentleman's purpose.

In the next place, the gentleman seems to be at a great loss to account for the credit which the chief priests gave to the prediction of the resurrection, by the care they took to prevent it. He thinks the thing in itself was too extravagant and absurd to deserve any regard; and that no one would have regarded such a prediction in any other time or place. I agree with the gentleman entirely; but then I demand of him a reason why the chief priests were under any concern about this prediction. Was it because they had plainly discovered him to be a cheat and an impostor? It is impossible. This reason would have convinced them of the folly and presumption of the prediction. It must therefore necessarily be, that they had discovered something in the life and actions of Christ which raised this jealousy, and made them listen to a prophecy in his case, which in any other case they would have despised. And what could this be, but the secret conviction they were under, by his many miracles, of his extraordinary powers? This care therefore of the chief priests over his dead, helpless body, is a lasting testimony of the mighty works which Jesus did in his lifetime; for had the Jews been persuaded that he performed no won-

ders in his life, I think they would not have been afraid of seeing any done by him after his death.

But the gentleman is of another mind. He says, they had discovered a plain cheat in the case of Lazarus, whom Christ had pretended to raise from the dead; and therefore they took all this care to guard against a like cheat.

I begin now to want evidence: I am forbid to call this imagination; what else to call it, I know not. There is not the least intimation given from history, that there was any cheat in the case of Lazarus, or that any one suspected a cheat. Lazarus lived in the country after he was raised from the dead; and though his life was secretly and basely sought after, yet nobody had the courage to call him to a trial for his part of the cheat. It may be said, perhaps, the rulers were terrified. Very well; but they were not terrified when they had Christ in their possession, when they brought him to a trial; why did they not then object this cheat to Christ? It would have been much to their purpose. Instead of that, they accuse him of a design to pull down their temple, to destroy their law, and of blasphemy; but not one word of any fraud in the case of Lazarus, or any other case.

But not to enter into the merits of this cause, which has in it too many circumstances for your present consideration, let us take the case to be as the gentleman states it, that the cheat in the case of Lazarus was detected, what consequence is to be expected? In all other cases, impostors once discovered grow odious and contemptible, and quite incapable of doing further mischief; so little are they regarded, that even when they tell the truth they are neglected. Was it so in this case? No, says the gentleman; the Jews were the more careful that

Christ should not cheat them in his own resurrection. Surely this is a most singular case. When the people thought him a prophet, the chief priests sought to kill him, and thought his death would put an end to his pretensions; when they and the people had discovered him to be a cheat, then they thought him not safe, even when he was dead, but were afraid he should prove a true prophet, and, according to his own prediction, rise again. A needless, a preposterous fear!

In the next place, the gentleman tells us how proper the care was that the chief priests took. I agree perfectly with him. Human policy could not invent a more proper method to guard against and prevent all fraud. They delivered the sepulchre, with the dead body in it, to a company of Roman soldiers, who had orders from their officer to watch the sepulchre. Their care went further still; they sealed the door of the sepulchre.

On this occasion, the gentleman has explained the use of seals when applied to such purposes. They imply, he says, a covenant, that the things sealed up shall remain in the condition they are, till the parties to the sealing are agreed to open them. I see no reason to enter into the learning about seals; let it be as the gentleman has stated it; what then?

Why, then, it seems, the apostles and chief priests were in a covenant that there should be no resurrection, at least no opening of the door, till they met together at an appointed time to view and unseal the door.

Your lordship and the court will now consider the probability of this supposition. When Christ was seized and carried to his trial, his disciples fled, and hid themselves for fear of the Jews, out of a just apprehension

that they should, if apprehended, be sacrificed with their master. Peter indeed followed him, but his courage soon failed, and it is well known in what manner he denied him. After the death of Christ, his disciples were so far from being ready to engage for his resurrection, or to enter into terms and agreements for the manner in which it should be done, that they themselves did not believe it ever would be ; they gave over all hopes and thoughts of it ; and far from entering into engagements with the chief priests, their whole concern was, to keep themselves concealed from them. This is a well-known case, and I will not trouble you with particular authorities to prove this truth. Can any man now in his right senses think, that the disciples under these circumstances entered into this covenant with the Jews ? I believe the gentleman does not think it, and for that reason says that seals so used import a covenant without a special agreement. Be it so ; and it must then be allowed that the apostles were no more concerned in these seals, than every other man in the country, and no more answerable for them ; for the covenant reached to every body as well as to them, since they were under no special contract.

But I beg pardon for spending your time unnecessarily, when the simple plain account of this matter will best answer all these jealousies and suspicions. The Jews, it is plain, were exceedingly solicitous about this event. For this reason they obtained a guard from Pilate ; and when they had, they were still suspicious lest their guards should deceive them, and enter into combination against them. To secure this point, they sealed the door, and required of the guards to deliver up the sepulchre to them, sealed as it was. This is the natural and true account of the

matter. Do but consider it in a parallel case. Suppose a prince should set a guard at the door of his treasury, and the officer who placed the guard should seal the door, and say to the soldiers, You shall be answerable for the seal if I find it broken : would not all the world understand the seal to be fixed to guard against the soldiers, who might, though employed to keep off others, be ready enough to pilfer themselves? This is in all such cases but a necessary care ; you may place guards, and when you do, all is in their power : *Et quis custodes custodiet ipsos ?* “ Who shall guard the guards themselves ? ”

But, it seems, that notwithstanding all this care, the seals were broken, and the body gone. If you complain of this, sir, demand satisfaction of your guards ; they only are responsible for it, the disciples had no more to do in it than you or I.

The guards, the gentleman says, have confessed the truth, and owned that they were asleep, and that the disciples in the meantime stole away the body. I wish the guards were in court, I would ask them, how they came to be so punctual in relating what happened when they were asleep ; what induced them to believe that the body was stolen at all ; what, that it was stolen by the disciples ; since by their own confession they were asleep, and saw nothing, saw nobody ! But since they are not to be had, I would desire to ask the gentleman the same questions ; and whether he has any authorities in point, to show that ever any man was admitted as an evidence in any court, to prove a fact which happened when he was asleep ! I see the gentleman is uneasy. I will press the matter no further.

As this story has no evidence to support it, so neither

has it any probability. The gentleman has given you the character of the disciples, that they were weak, ignorant men, full of the popular prejudices and superstitions of their country, which stuck close to them notwithstanding their long acquaintance with their master. The apostles are not much wronged in this account; and is it likely, that such men should engage in so desperate a design, as to steal away the body, in opposition to the combined power of the Jews and Romans? What could tempt them to it? What good could the dead body do them? Or if it could have done them any, what hope had they to succeed in their attempt? A dead body is not to be removed by sleight of hand; it requires many hands to move it; besides, the great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre was to be removed, which could not be done silently, or by men walking on tip-toes to prevent discovery; so that if the guards had really been asleep, yet there was no encouragement to go on in this enterprise; for it is hardly possible to suppose, but that rolling away the stone, moving the body, the hurry and confusion in carrying it off, must awaken them.

But supposing the thing practicable, yet the attempt was such as the disciples, consistently with their own notions, could not undertake. The gentleman says, they continued all their master's lifetime to expect to see him a temporal prince; and a friend of the gentleman's\* has observed, what is equally true, that they had the same expectation after his death. Consider now their case. Their master was dead, and they are to contrive to steal away his body. For what? Did they expect to make a king of the dead body, if they could get it into their power?

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\* Grounds, p. 33.

Or did they think, if they had it, they could raise it to life again? If they trusted so far to their master's prediction as to expect his resurrection, (which I think is evident they did not,) could they yet think the resurrection depended on their having the dead body? It is in all views absurd. But the gentleman supposes, that they meant to carry on the design for themselves, in their master's name, if they could but have persuaded the people to believe him risen from the dead. But he does not consider, that by this supposition he strips the disciples of every part of their character at once, and presents to us a new set of men, in every respect different from the former. The former disciples were plain, weak men, but these are bold, hardy, cunning, and contriving. The former were full of the superstition of their country, and expected a prince from the authority of their prophets: but these are despisers of the prophets, and of the notions of their countrymen, and are designing to turn these fables to their own advantage; for it cannot be supposed that they believed the prophets, and at the same time thought to accomplish or defeat them by so manifest a cheat, to which they themselves at least were conscious.

But let us take leave of these suppositions, and see how the true evidence in this case stands. Guards were placed, and they did their duty. But what are guards and sentinels against the power of God? An angel of the Lord opened the sepulchre; the guards saw him, and became like dead men. This account they gave to the chief priests, who, still persisting in their obstinacy, bribed the guards to tell the contradictory story of their being asleep and the body stolen.

I cannot but observe to your lordship, that all these cir-

cumstances, so much questioned and suspected, were necessary circumstances, supposing the resurrection to be true. The seal was broken, the body came out of the sepulchre, the guards were placed in vain to prevent it. Be it so ; I desire to know whether the gentleman thinks that the seal put God under covenant, or could prescribe to him a method of performing this great work, or whether he thinks the guards were placed to maintain the seal in opposition to the power of God. If he will maintain neither of these points, then the opening the seals, notwithstanding the guard set on them, will be an evidence, not of the fraud, but of the power of the resurrection ; and the guards will have nothing to answer for, but only this, that they were not stronger than God. The seal was a proper check on the guards ; the Jews had no other meaning in it ; they could not be so stupid as to imagine that they could by this contrivance disappoint the designs of Providence. And it is surprising to hear these circumstances made use of to prove the resurrection to be a fraud, which yet could not but happen, supposing the resurrection to be true.

But there is another circumstance still, which the gentleman reckons very material, and on which I find great stress is laid. The resurrection happened, we are told, a day sooner than the prediction imported. The reason assigned for it is, that the execution of the plot at the time appointed was rendered impracticable, because the chief priests, and probably great numbers of the people, were prepared to visit the sepulchre at that time ; and therefore the disciples were under the necessity of hastening their plot.

This observation is entirely inconsistent with the sup-

position on which the reasoning stands. The gentleman has all along supposed the resurrection to have been managed by fraud, and not by violence. And indeed violence, if there had been an opportunity of using it, would have been insignificant; beating the guards, and removing the dead by force, would have destroyed all pretences to a resurrection. Now, surely the guards, supposing them not to be enough in number to withstand all violence, were at least sufficient to prevent or to discover fraud. What occasion then to hasten the plot for fear of numbers meeting at the tomb, since there were numbers always present sufficient to discover any fraud; the only method that could be used in the case?

Suppose then that we could not give a satisfactory account of the way of reckoning the time from the crucifixion to the resurrection; yet this we can say, that the resurrection happened during the time that the guards had the sepulchre in keeping; and it is impossible to imagine what opportunity this could give to fraud. Had the time been delayed, the guards removed, and then a resurrection pretended, it might with some colour of reason have been said, Why did he not come within his time? why did he choose to come after his time, when all witnesses, who had patiently expected the appointed hour, were withdrawn? But now what is to be objected? You think he came too soon. But were not your guards at the door when he came? did they not see what happened? and what other satisfaction could you have had, supposing he had come a day later?

By saying of this, I do not mean to decline the gentleman's objection, which is founded on a mistake of a way of speaking, common to the Jews and other people;

who, when they name any number of days or years, include the first and the last of the days or years to make up the sum. Christ alluding to his own resurrection, says, "In three days I will raise it up." The angels report his prediction thus, "The son of man shall be crucified, and the third day rise again." Elsewhere it is said, "After three days;" and again, that he was to be in the bowels of the earth "three days and three nights." These expressions are equivalent to each other; for we always reckon the night into the day, when we reckon by so many days. If you agree to do a thing ten days hence, you stipulate for forbearance for the nights as well as days; and therefore, in reckoning, three days, and three days and three nights, are the same thing. That the expression, "After three days," means inclusive days, is proved by Grotius on Matt. xxvii. 63, and by others. The prediction therefore was, that he would rise on the third day. Now, he was crucified on Friday, and buried; he lay in the grave all Saturday, and rose early on Sunday morning. But the gentleman thinks he ought not have risen until Monday. Pray try what the use of common language requires to be understood in a like case. Suppose you were told, that your friend sickened on Friday, was let blood on Saturday, and the third day he died; what day would you think he died on? If you have any doubt about it, put the question to the first plain man you meet, and he will resolve it. The Jews could have no doubt in this case; for so they practised in one of the highest points of their law. Every male child was to be circumcised on the eighth day. How did they reckon the days? Why, the day of the birth was one, and the day of the circumcision another; and though a child was born towards the very

end of the first day, he was capable of circumcision on any time of the eighth day. And therefore it is not new or strange, that the third day, in our case, should be reckoned into the number, though Christ rose at the very beginning of it. It is more strange to reckon whole years in this manner; and yet this is the constant method observed in Ptolemy's canon, the most valuable piece of ancient chronology, next to the Bible, now extant. If a king lived over the first day of a year, and died the week after, the whole year is reckoned to his reign.

I have now gone through the several objections on this head: what credit they may gain in this age, I know not; but it is plain they had no credit when they were first spread abroad; nay, it is evident that the very persons who set abroad this story of the body being stolen, did not believe it themselves. And, not to insist here on the plain fact, which was, that the guards were hired to tell this lie by the chief priests, it will appear from the after conduct of the chief priests themselves, that they were conscious that the story was false. Not long after the resurrection of Christ, the disciples having received new power from above, appeared publicly in Jerusalem, and in the very temple, and testified the resurrection of Christ, even before those who had murdered him. What now do the chief priests do? They seize on the apostles, they threaten them, they beat them, they scourge them, and all to stop their mouths, insisting that they should say no more of the matter. But why did they not, when they had the disciples in their power, charge them directly with their notorious cheat in stealing the body, and expose them to the people as impostors? This had been much more to their purpose, than all their menaces

and ill usage, and would more effectually have undeceived the people. But of this not one word is said. They try to murder them, enter into combinations to assassinate them, prevail with Herod to put one of them to death : but not so much as a charge against them of any fraud in the resurrection. Their orator, Tertullus, who could not have missed so fine a topic of declamation, had there been but a suspicion to support it, is quite silent on this head, and is content to flourish on the commonplace of sedition and heresy, profaning the temple, and the like ; very trifles to his cause, in comparison to the other accusation, had there been any ground to make use of it. And yet as it happens, we are sure the very question of the resurrection came under debate ; for Festus tells king Agrippa, that the Jews had certain questions against Paul “<sup>d</sup>of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” After this Agrippa hears Paul himself ; and had he suspected, much less had he been convinced that there was a cheat in the resurrection, he would hardly have said to Paul at the end of the conference, “Almost thou persuadedest me to be a Christian.”

But let us see what the council and senate of the children of Israel thought of this matter, in the most solemn and serious deliberation they ever had about it. (Acts v.) Not long after the resurrection, the apostles were taken ; the high priest thought the matter of that weight, that he summoned the council and senate of the children of Israel. The apostles are brought before them, and make their defence. Part of their defence is in these words : “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree.” The defence was indeed a heavy charge on the senate, and in the warmth of their anger,

their first resolution was to slay them all. But Gamaliel, one of the council, stood up and told them that the matter deserved more consideration. He recounted to them the history of several impostors who had perished, and concluded with respect to the case of the apostles then before them; "If this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God." The council agreed to this advice, and after some ill treatment, the apostles were discharged. I ask now, and let any man of common sense answer, Could Gamaliel possibly have given this advice, and supposed that the hand of God might be with the apostles, if he had known that there was a cheat discovered in the resurrection of Jesus? Could the whole senate have followed this advice, had they believed the discovery of the cheat? Was there not among them one man wise enough to say, How can you suppose God to have anything to do in this affair, when the resurrection of Jesus, on which all depends, was a notorious cheat, and manifestly proved to be so? I should but lessen the weight of this authority by saying more, and therefore I will rest here, and give way to the gentleman to go on with his accusation.

*Mr. A.* My lord, before I proceed any further I beg leave to say a few words in reply to what the gentleman has offered on this head.

The gentleman thinks that the detection in the case of Lazarus ought to have made the Jews quite unconcerned in the case of Jesus, and secure as to the event of his own resurrection. He says very true, supposing their care had been for themselves: but governors have another care on their hands, the care of their people; and it is

not enough for them to guard against being imposed on themselves, they must be watchful to guard the multitude against frauds and deceits. The chief priests were satisfied indeed of the fraud in the case of Lazarus, yet they saw the people deceived by it; and for this reason, and not for their own satisfaction, they used the caution in the case of the resurrection of Jesus, which I before laid before you. In so doing, they are well justified; and the inconsistency charged on the other side, between their opinion of Jesus, and their fear of being imposed on by his pretended resurrection is fully answered.

The next observation relates to the seal of the sepulchre. The gentleman thinks the seal was used as a check on the Roman soldiers. But what reason had the Jews to suspect them? They were not disciples of Jesus; they were servants of the Roman governor, and employed in the service of the Jews; and I leave it to the court to judge, whether the Jews set the seal to guard against their friends or their enemies. But if the seals were really used against the guards, then the breaking of the seals is a proof that the guards were corrupted; and if so, it is easy to conceive how the body was removed.

As to the disciples, the gentleman observes, that the part allotted them in the management of the resurrection supposes an unaccountable change in their character. It will not be long before the gentleman will have occasion for as great a change in their character; for these weak men you will find soon employed in converting the world, and sent to appear before kings and princes in the name of their master; soon you will see them grow wise and powerful, and every way qualified for their extensive and important business. The only difference between me

and the gentleman on the other side will be found to be this, that I date this change a little earlier than he does; a small matter, surely, to determine the right of this controversy.

The last observation relates to king Agrippa's complaisance to Paul and Gamaliel's advice. I cannot answer for Agrippa's meaning; but certainly he meant but little; and if this matter is to be tried by his opinion, we know that he never did turn Christian. As for Gamaliel, it is probable that he saw great numbers of the people engaged zealously in favour of the apostles, and might think it prudent to pass the matter over in silence, and not to come to extremities. This is a common case in all governments; the multitude and their leaders often escape punishment, not because they do not deserve it, but because it is not, in some circumstances, prudent to exact it.

I pass over these things lightly, because the next article contains the great, to us indeed, who live at this distance, the only great question; for whatever reason the Jews had to believe the resurrection, it is nothing to us, unless the story has been conveyed to us on such evidence as is sufficient to support the weight laid on it.

My lord, we are now to enter on the last and main article of this case, the nature of the evidence on which the credit of the resurrection stands. Before I inquire into the qualifications of the particular witnesses whose words we are desired to take in this case, I would ask, why this evidence, which manifestly relates to the most essential point of Christianity was not put beyond all exception. Many of the miracles of Christ are said to be done in the streets, nay, even in the temple, under the

observation of all the world ; but the like is not so much as pretended as to this ; nay, we have it on the confession of Peter, the ringleader of the apostles, that Christ appeared, “ not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God.” Acts x. 41. Why picking and culling of witnesses in this case more than in any other ? Does it not import some suspicion, raise some jealousy, that this case would not bear the public light ?

I would ask more particularly, why did not Jesus after his resurrection appear openly to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews ? Since his commission related to them in an especial manner, why were not his credentials laid before them ? The resurrection is acknowledged to be the chief proof of his mission ; why then was it concealed from those who were more than all others concerned in the event of his mission ? Suppose an ambassador from some foreign prince should come into England, make his public entry through the city, pay and receive visits, and at last refuse to show any letters of credence, or to wait on the king, what would you think of him ? Whatever you would think in that case, you must think in this, for there is no difference between them.

But we must take the evidence as it is. It was thought proper in this case to have select chosen witnesses ; and we must now consider who they were, and what reason we have to take their word.

The first witness was an angel, or angels. They appeared like men to some women who went early to the sepulchre. If they appeared like men, on what ground are we to take them for angels ? The women saw men, and therefore they can witness only to the seeing of men. But I suppose it is the women’s judgment, and not their

evidence, that we are to follow in this case. Here then we have a story of one apparition to support the credit of another apparition ; and the first apparition hath not so much as the evidence of the women to support it, but is grounded on their superstition, ignorance, and fear. Every country can afford an hundred instances of this kind ; and there is this common to them all, that as learning and common sense prevail in any country, they die away, and are no more heard of.

The next witnesses are the women themselves. The wisest men can hardly guard themselves against the fears of superstition ; poor silly women therefore in this case, must needs be unexceptionable witnesses, and fit to be admitted into the number of the chosen witnesses to attest this fact. One part of the account given of them is very rational, that they were surprised and frightened beyond measure ; and I leave it to your lordship and the court to judge, how well qualified they were to give a just relation of what passed.

After this, Jesus appears to two of his disciples as they were on a journey ; he joins them, and introduces a discourse about himself, and spent much time, till it began to grow dark, in expounding the prophecies relating to the death and resurrection of the Messias. All this while the disciples knew him not. But then going into a house to lodge together, at supper he broke bread, and gave it to them ; immediately they knew him, immediately he vanished. Here then are two witnesses more. But what will you call them ? eye-witnesses ? Why their eyes were open, and they had their senses when he reasoned with them, and they knew him not. So far, therefore, they are witnesses that it was not he. Tell us, therefore, upon

what account you reject the evidence of their sense before the breaking of the bread, and insist on it afterwards? And why did Jesus vanish as soon as known, which has more of the air of an apparition than of the appearance of a real man restored to life?

Cleopas, who was one of these two disciples, finds out the apostles, to make out the report of what had passed, to them. No sooner was the story told, but Jesus appears among them. They were all frightened and confounded, and thought they saw a spectre. He rebukes them for infidelity, and their slowness in believing the prophecies of his resurrection; and though he refused before to let the women touch him, (a circumstance which I ought not to have omitted,) yet now he invites the apostles to handle him, to examine his hands and feet, and search the wounds of the cross. But what body was it they examined? The same that came in when the doors were shut; the same that vanished from the two disciples; the same that the women might not touch: in a word, a body quite different from a human body, which we know cannot pass through walls, or appear or disappear at pleasure. What then could their hands or eyes inform them of in this case? Besides, is it credible that God should raise a body imperfectly, with the very wounds in it of which it died? Or, if the wounds were such as destroyed the body before, how could a natural body subsist with them afterwards?

There are more appearances of Jesus recorded; but so much of the same kind, so liable to the same difficulties and objections, that I will not trouble your lordship and the court with a distinct enumeration of them. If the gentleman on the other side finds any advantage in any of them more than in these mentioned, I shall have an opportunity to consider them in my reply.

It may seem surprising to you, perhaps, that a matter of this moment was trusted upon such evidence as this ; but it will be still more surprising to consider that the several nations who received the gospel, and submitted to the faith of this article, had not even this evidence ; for what people or nation had the evidence of the angels, the women, or even of all the apostles ? So far from it, that every country had its single apostle, and received the faith on the credit of his single evidence. We have followed our ancestors without inquiry ; and if you examine the thing to the bottom, our belief was originally built on the word of one man.

I shall trouble you, sir, but with one observation more, which is this : that although in common life we act in a thousand instances on the faith and credit of human testimony, yet the reason for so doing is not the same in the case before us. In common affairs, where nothing is asserted but what is probable and possible, and according to the usual course of nature, a reasonable degree of evidence ought to determine every man ; for the very probability or possibility of the thing is a support to the evidence ; and in such cases we have no doubt but a man's senses qualify him to be a witness. But when the thing testified is contrary to the order of nature, and, at first sight at least, impossible, what evidence can be sufficient to overturn the constant evidence of nature, which she gives us in the uniform and regular method of her operations ? If a man tells me he has been in France, I ought to give a reason for not believing him ; but if he tells me he comes from the grave, what reason can he give why I should believe him ? In the case before us, since the body raised from the grave differed from common natural

bodies, as we have before seen, how can I be assured that the apostles' senses qualified them to judge at all of his body—whether it was the same, or not the same which was buried? They handled the body, which yet could pass through doors and walls; they saw it, and sometimes knew it, at other times knew it not. In a word, it seems to be a case exempt from human evidence. Men have limited senses, and a limited reason; when they act within their limits, we may give credit to them; but when they talk of things removed beyond the reach of their senses and reason, we must quit our own, if we believe theirs.

*Mr. B.* My lord, in answering the objections under this head, I shall find myself obliged to change the order in which the gentleman thought proper to place them. He began with complaining that Christ did not appear publicly to the Jews after his resurrection, and especially to the chief priests and rulers; and seemed to argue as if such evidence would have put the matter in question out of all doubt; but he concluded with an observation to prove that no evidence in this case can be sufficient; that a resurrection is a thing in nature impossible, at least impossible to be proved to the satisfaction of a rational inquirer. If this be the case, why does he require more evidence, since none can be sufficient? Or to what purpose is it to vindicate the particular evidence of the resurrection of Christ, so long as this general prejudice, that a resurrection is incapable of being proved, remains unremoved? I am under a necessity therefore to consider this observation in the first place, that it may not lie as a dead weight on all I have to offer in support of the evidence of Christ's resurrection.

The gentleman allows it to be reasonable in many cases,

to act on the testimony and credit of others ; but he thinks this should be confined to such cases, where the thing testified is probable, possible, and according to the usual course of nature. The gentleman does not, I suppose, pretend to know the extent of all natural possibilities, much less will he suppose them to be generally known ; and therefore his meaning must be, that the testimony of witnesses is to be received only in cases which appear to us to be possible. In any other sense we can have no dispute ; for mere impossibilities, which can never exist, can never be proved. Taking the observation therefore in this sense, the proposition is this : that the testimony of others ought not to be admitted, but in such matters as appear probable, or at least possible, to our conceptions. For instance : a man who lives in a warm climate, and never saw ice, ought on no evidence believe that rivers freeze and grow hard in cold countries ; for this is improbable, contrary to the usual course of nature, and impossible according to his notion of things. And yet we all know, that this is a plain, manifest case, discernible by the senses of men, of which therefore they are qualified to be good witnesses. A hundred such instances might be named, but it is needless ; for surely nothing is more apparently absurd than to make one man's ability in discerning, and his veracity in reporting plain facts, depend on the skill or ignorance of the hearer. And what has the gentleman said on this occasion against the resurrection, more than any man who never saw ice might say against a hundred honest witnesses who assert that water turns to ice in cold climates ?

It is very true that men do not so easily believe, on testimony of others, things which to them seem improbable

or impossible ; but the reason is not because the thing itself admits no evidence, but because the hearer's pre-conceived opinion outweighs the credit of the reporter, and makes his veracity to be called in question. For instance : it is natural for a stone to roll down hill, it is unnatural for it to roll up hill ; but a stone moving up hill is as much the object of sense as a stone moving down-hill ; and all men in their senses are as capable of seeing and judging, and reporting the fact in one case as in the other. Should a man then tell you that he saw a stone go up hill of its own accord, you might question his veracity, but you could not say the thing admitted no evidence, because it was contrary to the law and usual course of nature ; for the law of nature formed to yourself from your own experience and reasoning, is quite independent of the matter of fact which the man testifies ; and whenever you see facts yourself, which contradict your notions of the law of nature, you admit the facts, because you believe yourself ; when you do not admit like facts on the evidence of others, it is because you do not believe them, and not because the facts in their own nature exclude all evidence.

Suppose a man should tell you that he was come from the dead, you would be apt to suspect his evidence. But what would you suspect ? That he was not alive when you heard him, saw him, felt him, and conversed with him ? You could not suspect this, without giving up all your senses, and acting in this case as you act in no other. Here then you would question whether the man had ever been dead. But would you say, that it is incapable of being made plain by human testimony that this or that man died a year ago ? It cannot be said. Evidence in this case is admitted in all courts perpetually.

Consider it the other way. Suppose you saw a man publicly executed, his body afterwards wounded by the executioner, and carried and laid in the grave; that after this you should be told that the man was come to life again; what would you suspect in this case? Not that the man had never been dead, for that you saw yourself; but you would suspect whether he was now alive. But would you say this case excluded all human testimony, and that men could not possibly discern whether one with whom they conversed familiarly was alive or no? On what ground could you say this? A man rising from the grave is an object of sense, and can give the same evidence of his being alive, as any other man in the world can give. So that a resurrection considered only as a fact to be proved by evidence, is a plain case; it requires no greater ability in the witnesses, than that they be able to distinguish between a man dead and a man alive, a point in which I believe every man living thinks himself a judge.

I do allow that this case, and others of like nature, require more evidence to give them credit than ordinary cases do. You may therefore require more evidence in these than in other cases; but it is absurd to say that such cases admit no evidence, when the things in question are manifestly objects of sense.

I allow further, that the gentleman has rightly stated the difficulty on the foot of common prejudice; and that it arises from hence, that such cases appear to be contrary to the course of nature. But I desire him to consider what this course of nature is. Every man, from the lowest countryman to the highest philosopher, frames to himself, from his experience and observation, a notion of a course of nature, and is ready to say of everything re-

ported to him that contradicts his experience, that it is contrary to nature. But will the gentleman say, that everything is impossible, or even improbable, that contradicts the notion which men frame to themselves of the course of nature? I think he will not say it. And if he will, he must say that water can never freeze; for it is absolutely inconsistent with the notion which men have of the course of nature, who live in the warm climates. And hence it appears, that when men talk of the course of nature, they really talk of their own prejudices and imaginations; and that sense and reason are not so much concerned in the case as the gentleman imagines. For I ask, is it from the evidence of sense, or the evidence of reason, that people in warm climates think it contrary to nature that water should grow solid and become ice? As for sense, they see indeed that water with them is always liquid; but none of their senses tell them that it can never grow solid. As for reason, it can never so inform them; for right reason can never contradict the truth of things. Our senses then inform us rightly what the usual course of things is; but when we conclude that things cannot be otherwise, we outrun the information of our senses, and the conclusion stands on prejudice, and not on reason. And yet such conclusions form what is generally called the course of nature. And when men on proper evidence and information admit things contrary to this presupposed course of nature, they do not, as the gentleman expresses it, "quit their own sense and reason," but in truth they quit their own mistakes and prejudices.

In the case before us, the case of the resurrection, the great difficulty arises from the like prejudice. We all know by experience that all men die, and rise no more;

therefore, we conclude that for a dead man to rise to life again is contrary to the course of nature. And certainly it is contrary to the uniform and settled course of things. But if we argue from hence, that it is contrary and repugnant to the real laws of nature, and absolutely impossible on that account, we argue without any foundation to support us, either from our senses or our reason. We cannot learn from our eyes, or feeling, or any other sense, that it is impossible for a dead body to live again ; if we learn it at all, it must be from our reason ; and yet what one maxim of reason is contradicted by the supposition of a resurrection ? For my own part, when I consider how I live, that all the animal motions necessary to my life are independent of my will, that my heart beats without my consent, and without my direction, that digestion and nutrition are performed by methods to which I am not conscious, that my blood moves in a perpetual round, which is contrary to all known laws of motion, I cannot but think, that the preservation of my life, in every moment of it, is as great an act of power as is necessary to raise a dead man to life. And whoever so far reflects on his own being, as to acknowledge that he owes it to a superior power, must needs think that the same power which gave life to senseless matter at first, and set all the springs and movements agoing at the beginning, can restore life to a dead body. For surely it is not a greater thing to give life to a body once dead than to a body that never was alive.

In the next place must be considered the difficulties which the gentleman has laid before you, with regard to the nature of Christ's body after the resurrection. He has produced some passages which he thinks imply that

the body was not a real natural body, but a mere phantom, or apparition: and thence concludes that there being no real object of sense, there can be no evidence in the case.

Presumptions are of no weight against positive evidence; and every account of the resurrection assures us that the body of Christ was seen, felt, and handled by many persons, who were called on by Christ so to do, that they might be assured that he had flesh and bones, and was not a mere spectre, as they, in their first surprise, imagined him to be. It is impossible that they who give this account should mean, by anything they report, to imply that he had no real body; it is certain then, that when the gentleman makes use of what they say to this purpose, he uses their sayings contrary to their meaning: for it is not pretended that they say, that Christ had not a real human body after the resurrection; nor is it pretended they had any such thought, except only on the first surprise of seeing him, and before they had examined him with their eyes and hands. But something they have said, which the gentleman, according to his notions of philosophy, thinks, implies that the body was not real. To clear this point, therefore, I must lay before you the passages referred to, and consider how justly the gentleman reasons from them.

The first passage relates to Mary Magdalene, who, the first time she saw Christ, was going to embrace his feet as the custom of the country was: Christ says to her, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and tell them," &c. John xx. 17. Hence the gentleman concludes, that Christ's body was not such a one as would bear the touch. But how does he infer this? Is it from these words, "Touch me not?"

It cannot be, for thousands say it every day, without giving the least suspicion, that their bodies are not capable of being touched. The conclusion then must be built on those other words, "For I am not yet ascended to my Father." But what have these words to do with the reality of his body? It might be real or not real, for anything that is here said. There is a difficulty in these words, and it may be hard to give the true sense of them; but there is no difficulty in seeing that they have no relation to the nature of Christ's body; for of his body nothing is said. The natural sense of the place, as I collect, by comparing this passage with Matt. xxviii. 9, is this: Mary Magdalene, on seeing Jesus, fell at his feet, and laid hold of them, and held them as if she meant never to let them go: Christ said to her, "Touch me not, or hang not about me now; you will have other opportunities of seeing me, for I go not yet to my Father: lose no time then, but go quickly with my message to my brethren." I am not concerned to support this particular interpretation of the passage; it is sufficient for my purpose to show that the words cannot possibly relate to the nature of Christ's body one way or other.

The next passage relates to Christ's joining two of his disciples on the road, and conversing with them without being known by them: it grew dark; they pressed him to stay with them that night; he went in with them, broke bread, and blessed it, and gave it them, and then they knew him, and immediately he disappeared.

The circumstance of disappearing shall be considered under the next head, with other objections of the like kind. At present I shall only examine the other parts of this story, and inquire whether they afford any ground

to conclude that the body of Christ was not a real one. Had this piece of history been related of any other person, I think no such suspicion could have arisen. For what is there unnatural or uncommon in this account? Two men meet an acquaintance whom they thought dead: they converse with him for some time without suspecting who he was; the very persuasion they were under that he was dead, contributed greatly to their not knowing him; besides, he appeared in a habit and form different from what he used when he conversed with them; appeared to them on a journey, and walked with them side by side; in which situation no one of the company has a full view of another: afterwards, when they were at supper together, and lights brought in, they plainly discerned who he was. On this occasion the gentleman asks, what sort of witnesses these are; eye-witnesses? No, before supper they were eye-witnesses, says the gentleman, that the person whom they saw was not Christ; and then he demands a reason for our rejecting the evidence of their sense when they did not know Christ, and insisting on it when they did.

It is no uncommon thing for men to catch themselves and others by such notable acute questions, and to be led by the sprightliness of their imagination out of the road of truth and common sense. I beg leave to tell the gentleman a short story, and then to ask him his own question. A certain gentleman who had been some years abroad, happened in his return to England through Paris to meet his own sister there. She not expecting to see him there, nor he to see her, they conversed together with other company, at a public house, for great part of a day, without knowing each other. At last the lady began to show great signs of disorder; her colour came

and went, and the eyes of the company were drawn towards her; and then she cried out, "O, my brother!" and was hardly held from fainting. Suppose now this lady were to depose on oath in a court of justice, that she saw her brother at Paris; I would ask the gentleman whether he would object to the evidence, and say that she was as good an eye-witness that her brother was not there, as that he was; and demand of the court, why they rejected the evidence of her sense when she did not know her brother, and were ready to believe it when she did? When the question is answered in this case, I desire only to have the benefit of it in the case now before you. But if you shall be of opinion, that there was some extraordinary power used on this occasion, and incline to think that the expression, "their eyes were holden," imports as much; then the case will fall under the next article. In which,

We are to consider Christ's vanishing out of sight; his coming in and going out when the doors were shut; and such like passages; which, as they fall under one consideration, so I shall speak to them together.

But it is necessary first to see what the apostles affirm distinctly in their accounts of these facts; for I think more has been said for them, than ever they said, or intended to say for themselves. In one place, it is said, "He vanished out of their sight," Luke xxiv. 31. Which translation is corrected in the margin of our Bibles thus: "He ceased to be seen of them." And the original\* imports no more.

It is said in another place, that the disciples being to-

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\* "Αφαντος ἐγένετο.

gether, "and the doors shut," Jesus came and stood in the midst of them. How he came, is not said ; much less is it said that he came through the door, or the key-hole ; and for anything that is said to the contrary, he might come in at the door, though the disciples saw not the door open, nor him, till he was in the midst of them. But the gentleman thinks these passages prove that the disciples saw no real body, but an apparition. I am afraid that the gentleman, after all his contempt of apparitions, and the superstitions on which they are founded, is fallen into the snare himself, and is arguing on no better principles than the common notions which the vulgar have of apparitions. Why else does he imagine these passages to be inconsistent with the reality of Christ's body ? Is there no way for a real body to disappear ? Try the experiment now ; do but put out the candles, we shall all disappear. If a man falls asleep in the day-time, all things disappear to him ; his senses are all locked up ; and yet all things about him continue to be real, and his senses continue perfect. As shutting out all rays of light would make all things disappear, so intercepting the rays of light from any particular body, would make that disappear. Perhaps something like this was the case ; or perhaps something else, of which we know nothing. But, be the case what it will, the gentleman's conclusion is founded on no principle of true philosophy ; for it does not follow that a body is not real, because I lose sight of it suddenly. I shall be told, perhaps, that this way of accounting for the passages is as wonderful and as much out of the common course of things as the other. Perhaps it is so ; and what then ? Surely the gentleman does not expect that, in order to prove the reality of the greatest miracle that ever

was, I should show that there was nothing miraculous in it, but that everything happened according to the ordinary course of things. My only concern is to show that these passages do not infer that the body of Christ after the resurrection was no real body. I wonder the gentleman did not carry his argument a little further, and prove that Christ, before his death, had no real body; for we read, that when the multitude would have thrown him down a precipice, he went through the midst of them unseen. Now, nothing happened after his resurrection more unaccountable than this that happened before it; and if the argument be good at all, it will be good to prove that there never was such a man as Jesus in the world. Perhaps the gentleman may think this a little too much to prove; and if he does, I hope he will quit the argument in one case as well as in the other, for difference there is none.

Hitherto we have been called upon to prove the reality of Christ's body, and that it was the same after the resurrection that it was before; but the next objection complains that the body was too much the same with that which was buried; for the gentleman thinks that it had the same mortal wounds open and uncured of which it died. His observation is grounded on the words which Christ used to Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side," John xx. 27. Is it here affirmed, that Thomas did actually put his hand into his side, or so much as see his wounds fresh and bleeding? Nothing like it; but it is supposed from the words of Christ; for if he had no wounds, he would not have invited Thomas to probe them. Now the meaning of Christ will best ap-

pear by an account of the occasion he had to use this speech. He had appeared to his disciples in the absence of Thomas, and shown them his hands and feet, which still had the marks of his crucifixion. The disciples report this to Thomas; he thought the thing impossible, and expressed his unbelief, as men are apt to do when they are positive, in a very extravagant manner. You talk, says he, of the prints of the nails in his hands and feet; for my part, I will never believe this thing, "except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side." Now, in the first place, here is nothing said of open wounds. Thomas talks only of putting his finger into the print, that is, the scar of the nails, and of thrusting his hand into his side. And, in common speech, to thrust a hand into any one's side, does not signify to thrust it through the side into the bowels. On this interpretation of the words, which is a plain and natural one, the gentleman's objection is quite gone. But suppose Thomas to mean what the gentleman means; in that case the words of Christ are manifestly a severe reproach to him for his infidelity: Here, says Christ, are my hands and my side; take the satisfaction you require; thrust your fingers into my hands, your hand into my side; repeating to him his own words, and calling him to his own conditions; which, to a man beginning to see his extravagance, is of all rebukes the severest. Such forms of speech are used on many occasions, and are never understood to import that the thing proposed is proper, or always practicable. When the Grecian women reproached their sons with cowardice, and called to them as they were flying from the enemy, to come and hide themselves

once more, like children as they were, in their mothers' wombs, he would have been ridiculous who had asked the question, whether the women really thought that they could take their sons into their wombs again?

I have now gone through the objections which were necessarily to be removed before I could state the evidence in this case. I am sensible I have taken up too much of your time; but I have this to say in my excuse, that objections built on popular notions and prejudices are easily conveyed to the mind in a few words, and so conveyed, make strong impressions; but whoever answers the objections must encounter all the notions to which they are allied, and to which they owe their strength; and it is well if with many words he can find admittance.

I come now to consider the evidence on which our belief of the resurrection stands. And here I am stopped again. A general exception is taken to the evidence, that it is imperfect, unfair; and a question is asked, Why did not Christ appear publicly to all the people, especially to the magistrates? Why were some witnesses culled and chosen out, and others excluded?

It may be sufficient perhaps to say, that where there are witnesses enough, no judge, no jury complains for want of more; and therefore, if the witnesses we have are sufficient, it is no objection that we have not others, and more. If three credible men attest a will, which are as many as the law requires, would any body ask, why all the town were not called to set their hands? But why were these witnesses culled and chosen out? Why? For this reason, that they might be good ones. Does not every wise man choose proper witnesses to his deed and to his will? and does not a good choice of witnesses give

strength to every deed? How comes it to pass then that the very thing which shuts out all suspicion in other cases, should in this case only, be of all others the most suspicious thing itself?

What reason there is to make any complaints on behalf of the Jews, may be judged, in part, from what has already appeared. Christ suffered openly in their sight; and they were so well apprised of his prediction that he should rise again, that they set a guard on his sepulchre; and from their guards they learned the truth. Every soldier was to them a witness of the resurrection, of their own choosing. After this they had not one apostle, (which the gentleman observes was the case of other people,) but all the apostles, and many other witnesses with them, and in their power. The apostles testified the resurrection to them; not only to the people, but to the elders of Israel assembled in senate; to support their evidence they were enabled to work, and did work miracles openly in the name of Christ. These people therefore had the least reason to complain, and had of all others the fullest evidence, and in some respects, such as none but themselves could have, for they only were keepers of the sepulchre. I believe if the gentleman was to choose an evidence to his own satisfaction in a like case, he would desire no more than to keep the sepulchre, with a sufficient number of guards.

But the argument goes further. It is said that Jesus was sent with a special commission to the Jews, that he was their Messias, and as his resurrection was his main credential, he ought to have appeared publicly to the rulers of the Jews after his resurrection; that in doing otherwise, he acted like an ambassador pretending authority

from his prince, but refusing to show his letters of credence.

I was afraid when I suffered myself to be drawn into this argument, that I should be led into matters fitter to be decided by men of another profession than by lawyers. But since there is no help now, I will lay before you what appears to me to be the natural and plain account of this matter, leaving it to others, who are better qualified, to give a fuller answer to the objection.

It appears to me, by the accounts we have of Jesus, that he had two distinct offices ; one, as the Messias particularly promised to the Jews ; another, as he was to be the great high priest of the world. With respect to the first office, he is called "the apostle of the Hebrews," (Heb. iii. 1 ; ) the "minister of the circumcision," (Rom. xv. 8 ; ) and says himself, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matt. xv. 24.) Accordingly when he sent out his apostles in his lifetime to preach, he expressly forbids them to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans ; but go, says he, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matt. x. 5, 6.) Christ continued in the discharge of this office during the time of his natural life, till he was finally rejected by the Jews. And it is observable, that the last time he spoke to the people, according to Matthew's account, he solemnly took leave of them, and closed his commission. He had been long among them publishing glad tidings ; but when all his preaching, all his miracles, had proved to be vain, the last thing he did was to denounce the woes they had brought on themselves. The 23d chapter of Matthew recites these woes, and at the end of them Christ takes this passionate leave of Jerusalem : "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the

prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." It is remarkable that this passage, as recorded by Matthew and Luke twice over, is determined by the circumstances to refer to the near approach of his own death, and the extreme hatred of the Jews to him ; and therefore, those words, "Ye shall not see me henceforth," are to be dated from the time of his death, and manifestly point out the end of his particular mission to them. From the making this declaration, as it stands in Matthew, his discourses are to his disciples, and they chiefly relate to the miserable and wretched condition of the Jews, which was now decreed, and soon to be accomplished. Let me now ask, whether in this state of things, any further credentials of Christ's commission to the Jews could be demanded or expected ? He was rejected, his commission was determined, and with it the fate of the nation was determined also ; what use then of more credentials ? As to appearing to them after his resurrection, he could not do it consistently with his own prediction, "Ye shall see me no more till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The Jews were not in this disposition after the resurrection, nor are they in it yet.

The resurrection was the foundation of Christ's new commission, which extended to all the world. Then it was he declared, that "all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth." Then he gave a new commission to his disciples, not restrained to the house of Israel, but

to go and "teach all nations." This prerogative the Jews had under this commission, that the gospel was everywhere first offered to them; but in no other terms than it was offered to the rest of the world. Since then this commission, of which the resurrection was the foundation, extended to all the world alike, what ground is there to demand special and particular evidence to the Jews? The emperor and the senate of Rome were a much more considerable part of the world, than the chief priests and the synagogue; why does not the gentleman object then that Christ did not show himself to Tiberius and his senate? And since all men have an equal right in this case, why may not the same demand be made for every country; nay, for every age? And then the gentleman may bring the question nearer home; and ask, Why Christ did not appear in England in king George's reign! There is, to my apprehension, nothing more unreasonable, than to neglect and despise plain and sufficient evidence before us, and to sit down to imagine what kind of evidence would have pleased us; and then to make the want of such evidence an objection to the truth; which yet, if well considered, would be found to be well established.

The observation I have made on the resurrection of Christ, naturally leads to another, which will help to account for the nature of the evidence we have on this great point. As the resurrection was the opening a new commission, in which all the world had an interest; so the concern naturally was, to have a proper evidence to establish this truth, and which should be of equal weight to all. This did not depend on the satisfaction given to private persons, whether they were magistrates or not magistrates; but on the conviction of those, whose office

it was to be, to bear testimony to this truth in the world. In this sense the apostles were chosen to be witnesses of the resurrection, because they were chosen to bear testimony to it in the world ; and not because they only were admitted to see Christ after his resurrection : for the fact is otherwise.

The gospel, indeed, concerned to show the evidence on which the faith of the world was to rest, is very particular in setting forth the ocular demonstration which the apostles had of the resurrection ; and mentions others, who saw Christ after his resurrection only accidentally, and as the thread of the history led to it. But yet it is certain, there were many others, who had this satisfaction, as well as the apostles. Luke tells us, that when Christ appeared to the eleven apostles, there were others with them (Luke xxiv. 33 ;) who they were, or how many they were, he says not. But it appears in the Acts, when an apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas, and the chief qualification required was, that he should be one capable of being a witness of the resurrection, that there were present a hundred and twenty so qualified.\* And Paul says, that Christ after his rising was seen by five hundred at once, many of whom were living when he appealed to their evidence. So that the gentleman is mistaken, when he imagines that a few only were chosen to see Christ after he came from the grave. The truth of the case is that out of those who saw him, some were chosen to bear testimony to the world ; and for that reason had the fullest demonstration of the truth, that they might be the better able to give satisfaction to others. And what was there

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\* Acts i. compare verses 15, 21, 22, together.

in this conduct to complain of? what to raise any jealousy or suspicion?

As to the witnesses themselves, the first the gentleman takes notice of, are the angels and the women. The mention of angels led naturally to apparitions; and the women were called poor silly women; and there is an end of their evidence. But to speak seriously: will the gentleman pretend to prove that there are no intelligent beings between God and man, or that they are not ministers of God, or that they were improperly employed in this great and wonderful work, the resurrection of Christ? Till some of these points are disproved, we may be at rest; for the angels were ministers, and not witnesses of the resurrection. And it is not on the credit of the poor silly women that we believe angels were concerned, but on the report of those who wrote the gospels, who deliver it as a truth known to themselves, and not merely as a report taken from the women.

But for the women what shall I say? Silly as they were, I hope at least they had eyes and ears, and could tell what they heard and saw. In this case they tell no more. They report that the body was not in the sepulchre; but so far from reporting the resurrection, they did not believe it, and were very anxious to find to what place the body was removed. Further they were not employed. For I think the gentleman in another part observes rightly, that they were not sent to bear testimony to any people. But suppose them to be witnesses; suppose them to be improper ones; yet the evidence of the men surely is not the worse, because some women happened to see the same thing which they saw. And if men only must be admitted, of them we have enough to establish this truth.

I will not spend your time in enumerating these witnesses, or in setting forth the demonstration they had of the truth which they report. These things are well known. If you question their sincerity, they lived miserably, and died miserably, for the sake of this truth. And what greater evidence of sincerity can man give or require? And what is still more, they were not deceived in their expectation by being ill treated; for he who employed them told them beforehand that the world would hate them, and treat them with contempt and cruelty.

But leaving these weighty and well known circumstances to your own reflection, I beg leave to lay before you another evidence, passed over in silence by the gentleman on the other side. He took notice that a resurrection was so extraordinary a thing that no human evidence could support it. I am not sure that he is not in the right. If twenty men were to come into England with such a report from a distant country, perhaps they might not find twenty more here to believe their story. And I rather think the gentleman may be in the right, because in the present case I see clearly that the credit of the resurrection of Christ was not trusted to mere human evidence. To what evidence it was trusted we find by his own declaration: "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also, (speaking to his apostles) shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John xv. 26, 27.) And therefore, though the apostles had conversed with him forty days after his resurrection, and had received his commission to go and teach all nations, yet he expressly forbids them entering on the work till they should receive powers from above. (Acts i. 14.) And

Peter explains the evidence of the resurrection in this manner : " We (the apostles) are his witnesses of these things ; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him." (Acts. v. 32.)

Now, what were the powers received by the apostles ? Were they not the powers of wisdom and courage, by which they were enabled to appear before rulers and princes in the name of Christ ; the power of miracles, even of raising the dead to life, by which they convinced the world that God was with them in what they said and did ? With respect to this evidence, John says, " If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." (1 John v. 9.) Add to this, that the apostles had a power to communicate these gifts to believers. Can you wonder that men believed the reality of those powers of which they were partakers, and became conscious to themselves ?

It was objected, that the apostles separated themselves to the work of the ministry, and one went into one country, another to another ; and consequently, that the belief of the resurrection was originally received every where on the testimony of one witness. I will not examine this fact ; suppose it to be so. But did this one witness go alone when he was attended with the powers of heaven ? Was not every blind man restored to sight, and every lame man to his feet, a new witness to the truth reported by the first ? Besides, when the people of different countries came to compare notes, and found that they had all received the same account of Christ, and of his doctrine, then surely the evidence of these distant witnesses thus united, became stronger than if they had told their story together ; for twelve men separately examined, form a

much stronger proof for the truth of any fact, than twelve men agreeing together in one story.

If the same thing were to happen in our own time, if one or two were to come into England, and report that a man was raised from the dead, and in consequence of it, teach nothing but that we ought to love God and our neighbours ; if to confirm their report, they should before our eyes cure the blind, the deaf, the lame, and even raise the dead to life ; if endowed with all these powers, they should live in poverty and distress, and patiently submit to all that scorn, contempt, and malice could contrive to distress them, and at last sacrifice even their lives in justification of the truth of their report ; if on inquiry, we should find that all the countries in Europe had received the same account, supported by the same miraculous powers, attested in like manner by the sufferings, and confirmed by the blood of the witnesses, I would fain know what any reasonable man would do in this case. Would he despise such evidence ? I think he would not. And whoever thinks otherwise, must say that a resurrection, though in its own nature possible, is yet such a thing in which we ought not to believe either God or man.

*Judge.* Have you done, sir ?

*Mr. B.* Yes, my lord.

*Judge.* Go on, *Mr. A.*, if you have anything to say in reply.

*Mr. A.* My lord, I shall trouble you with very little. The objections and answers under this head I shall leave to the judgment of the court, and beg leave only to make an observation or two on the last part of the gentleman's argument.

And first, with respect to the suffering of the apostles

and disciples of Jesus, and the argument drawn from thence for the truth of their doctrines and assertions, I beg leave to observe to you, that there is not a false religion or pretence in the world but can produce the same authority, and show many instances of men who have suffered even to death for the truth of their several professions. If we consult only modern history, we shall find Papists suffering for Popery, Protestants for their religion. And among Protestants every sect has had its martyrs; Puritans, Quakers, Fifth-monarchy men. In Henry VIII's time, England saw both Popish and Protestant martyrs; in Queen Mary's reign the rage fell on the Protestants; in Queen Elizabeth's, Papists and Puritans were called sometimes, though rarely, to this trial. In later times, sometimes Churchmen, sometimes Dissenters were persecuted. What must we say, then? All these sufferers had not truth with them; and yet, if there be any weight in this argument from suffering, they have all a right to plead it.

But I may be told, perhaps, that men by their sufferings, though they do not prove their doctrines to be true, yet prove at least their own sincerity: as if it were a thing impossible for men to dissemble at the point of death! Alas! how many instances are there of men's denying facts plainly proved, asserting facts plainly disproved, even with the rope about their necks! Must all such pass for innocent sufferers, sincere men? If not, it must be allowed that a man's word at the point of death is not always relied on.

Another observation I would make is with respect to the evidence of the Spirit, on which so much stress is laid. It has been hitherto insisted on, that the resurrection was

a matter of fact, and such a fact as was capable and proper to be supported by the evidence of sense. How comes it about, that this evidence, this which is the proper evidence, is given up as insufficient, and a new improper evidence introduced? It is not surprising that one great miracle should want a hundred more to prove it? Every miracle is itself an appeal to sense, and therefore admits no evidence but that of sense. And there is no connection between a miracle done this year and last year. It does not follow, therefore, because Peter cured a lame man, (allowing the fact,) that therefore Christ rose from the dead.

But allowing the gentleman all he demands, what is it to us? They who had the witness within them did perhaps very well to consult him and to take his word; but how am I, or others, who have not this witness in us, the better for it? If the first ages of the Church saw all the wonders related by the gentleman, and believed, it shows at least, in his opinion, that this strong evidence was necessary to create the belief he requires; why then does he require this belief of us, who have not this strong evidence?

*Judge.* Very well. Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard proofs and arguments on both sides, and it is now your part to give a verdict.

Here the gentlemen whispered together, and the foreman stood up.

*Foreman.* My lord, the cause has been long, and consists of several articles: therefore the jury hope you will give them your directions.

*Judge.* No, no; you are very able to judge without my help.

*Mr. A.* My lord, pray consider, you appointed this meeting, and chose your office. *Mr. B.* and I have gone through our parts, and have some right to insist on your doing your part.

*Mr. B.* I must join, sir, in that request.

*Judge.* I have often heard that all honour had a burden attending it; but I did not suspect it in this office, which I conferred on myself. But since it must be so, I will recollect and lay before you as well as I can the substance of the debate.

Gentlemen of the jury, the question before you is, Whether the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ are guilty of giving false evidence, or no?

Two sorts of objections, or accusations, are brought against them. One charges fraud and deceit on the transaction itself; the other charges the evidence as forged, and insufficient to support the credit of so extraordinary an event.

There are also three periods of time to be considered.

The first takes in the ministry of Christ, and ends at his death. During this period the fraud is supposed to be contrived.

The second reaches from his death to his resurrection. During this period the fraud is supposed to be executed.

The third begins from the resurrection, and takes in the whole ministry of the apostles. And here the evidence they gave the world for this fact is the main consideration.

As to the first period of time, and the fraud charged on Jesus, I must observe to you, that this charge had no evidence to support it; all the facts reported of Jesus stand in full contradiction to it. To suppose, as the counsel

did, that this fraud might possibly appear, if we had any Jewish books written at the time, is not to bring proof, but to wish for proof; for, as it was rightly observed on the other side, how does Mr. A. know there were any such books? And since they are lost, how does he know what was in them? Were such books extant, they might probably prove beyond dispute the facts recorded in the gospels.

You were told, that the Jews were a very superstitious people, much addicted to prophecy; and particularly, that they had a strong expectation, about the time that Christ appeared, of having a victorious prince arise among them. This is laid as the ground of suspicion; and in fact many impostors, you are told, set up on these notions of the people; and thence it is inferred, that Christ built his scheme on the strength of these popular prejudices. But when this fact came to be examined on the other side, it appeared that Christ was so far from falling in with these notions, and abusing the credulity of the people, that it was his main point to correct these prejudices, to oppose these superstitions; and by these very means he fell into disgrace with his countrymen, and suffered as one who, in their opinion, destroyed the law and the prophets. With respect to temporal power, so far was he from aiming at it, that he refused it when offered: so far from giving any hopes of it to his disciples, that he invited men on quite different terms, "to take up the cross, and follow him." And it is observable that after he had foretold his death and resurrection, he continued to admonish his disciples of the evils they were to suffer; to tell them that the world would hate them, and abuse them; which surely to common sense has no appearance that he was then contriving a cheat, or encouraging his disciples to execute it.

But as ill supported as this charge is, there was no avoiding it; it was necessity, and not choice, which drove the gentleman to it; for since Christ had foretold his resurrection, if the whole was a cheat, he certainly was conscious to it, and consequently the plot was laid in his own time. And yet the supposing Christ conscious to such a fraud in these circumstances, is contrary to all probability. It is very improbable, that he, or any man should, without any temptation, contrive a cheat to take place after his death. And if this could be supposed, it is highly improbable that he should give public notice of it, and thereby put all men on their guard; especially considering there were only a few women, and twelve men, of low fortunes and mean education, to conduct the plot, and the whole power of the Jews and Romans to oppose it.

Mr. A. seemed sensible of these difficulties, and therefore would have varied the charge, and have made Christ an enthusiast, and his disciples only cheats. This was not properly moved, and therefore not debated; for which reason I shall pass it over with this short observation, that enthusiasm is as contrary to the whole character and conduct of Christ, as even fraud is. Besides, this imagination, if allowed, goes only to Christ's own part; and leaves the charge of fraud in its full extent on the management from the time of his death, and therefore is of no use, unless the fraud afterwards be apparent. For if there really was a resurrection it will sufficiently answer the charge of enthusiasm.

I pass on then to the second period, to consider what happened between the death and resurrection of Christ. And here it is agreed that Christ died, and was buried. So far then there was no fraud.

For the better understanding the charge here, we must recollect a material circumstance reported by one of the evangelists, which is this : after Christ was buried, the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate, the Roman governor, and informed him that this deceiver (meaning Jesus) had in his lifetime foretold that he would rise again after three days ; that they suspected his disciples would steal away the body, and pretend a resurrection ; and then the “ last error would be worse than the first.” They therefore desire a guard to watch the sepulchre to prevent all fraud. They had one granted ; accordingly they placed a watch on the sepulchre, and sealed up the stone at the mouth of it.

What the event of this case was the same writer tells us. The guards saw the stone removed by angels, and for fear they became as dead men ; when they came to the city, they reported to the chief priests what had happened ; a council is called, and a resolution taken to bribe the soldiers to say that the body was stolen while they were asleep ; and the council undertook to excuse the soldiers to Pilate for their negligence in falling asleep when they were on duty.

Thus the fact stands in the original record. Now, the counsel for Woolston maintains that the story reported by the soldiers, after they had been bribed by the chief priests, contains the true account of this pretended resurrection.

The gentleman was sensible of a difficulty in his way to account for the credit which the Jews gave to the prediction of Christ ; for if, as he pretends, they knew him to be an impostor, what reason had they to take any notice of his prediction ? And therefore, that very caution in

this case betrayed their concern, and showed that they were not satisfied that his pretensions were groundless. To obviate this, he says that they had discovered before one great cheat in the case of Lazarus, and therefore were suspicious of another in this case. He was answered that the discovery of a cheat in the case before mentioned, ought rather to have set them at ease, and made them quite secure as to the event of the prediction. In reply he says, that the chief priests, however satisfied of the cheat themselves, had found that it prevailed among the people, and to secure the people from being further imposed on, they used the caution they did.

This is the substance of the argument on both sides.

I must observe to you that this reasoning from the case of Lazarus has no foundation in history. There is no pretence for saying that the Jews in this whole affair had any particular regard to the raising of Lazarus. And if they had any such just suspicion, why was it not mentioned at the trial of Christ? There was then an opportunity of opening the whole fraud, and undeceiving the people. The Jews had a plain law for punishing a false prophet; and what could be a stronger conviction, than such a cheat made manifest? Why then was this advantage lost?

The gentleman builds this observation on these words, "So the last error shall be worse than the first." But is there here anything said about Lazarus? No. The words are a proverbial form of speech, and probably were used without relation to any particular case. But if a particular meaning must be assigned, it is more probable that the words being used to Pilate, contained a reason applicable to him. Now, Pilate had been drawn in to

consent to the crucifixion, for fear the Jews should set up Jesus to be their king in opposition to Cæsar ; therefore say the chief priests to him, if once the people believe him to be risen from the dead, the last error will be worse than the first ; that is, they will be more inclined and encouraged to rebel against the Romans than ever. This is a natural sense of the words, as they are used to move the Roman governor to allow them a guard. Whether Lazarus were dead or alive ; whether Christ came to destroy the law and the prophets, or to establish or confirm them, was of little moment to Pilate. It is plain he was touched by none of these considerations ; and refused to be concerned in the affair of Christ, till he was alarmed with the suggestions of danger to the Roman state. This was the first fear that moved him : must not therefore the second now suggested to him be of the same kind ?

The next circumstance to be considered is that of the seal on the stone of the sepulchre. The counsel for Woolston supposes an agreement between the Jews and disciples about setting this seal. But for this agreement there is no evidence ; nay, to suppose it, contradicts the whole series of the history, as the gentleman on the other side observed. I will not enter into the particulars of this debate, for it is needless. The plain natural account given of this matter, shuts out all other suppositions. Mr. B. observed to you, that the Jews having a guard, set the seal to prevent any combination among the guards to deceive them ; which seems a plain and satisfactory account. The counsel for Woolston replies, let the use of the seals be what they will, it is plain they were broken ; and if they were used as a check on the Roman soldiers, then probably they consented to the fraud ; and then it is easily understood how the body was removed.

I must observe to you here that this suspicion agrees neither with the account given by the evangelist, nor with the story set about by the Jews; so that it is utterly unsupported by any evidence.

Nor has it any probability in it. For what could move Pilate and the Roman soldiers to propagate such a cheat? He had crucified Christ for no other reason but for fear the people should revolt from the Romans: perhaps too he had consented to place a guard on the sepulchre, to put an end to the people's hope in Jesus: and is it likely at last that he was consenting to a cheat, to make the people believe him risen from the dead; the thing, of all others, which he was obliged, as his apprehensions were, to prevent?

The next circumstance insisted on as a proof of the fraud, is that Jesus rose before the time he had appointed. Mr. A. supposes that the disciples hastened the plot, for fear of falling in with multitudes, who waited only for the appointed time to be at the sepulchre, and to see with their own eyes. He was answered that the disciples were not, could not be concerned, or be present at moving the body; that they were dispersed, and lay concealed for fear of the Jews; that hastening the plot was of no use, for the resurrection happened whilst the guards were at the sepulchre, who probably were enough to prevent violence, certainly enough to discover it, if any were used.

This difficulty then rests merely on the reckoning of the time. Christ died on Friday, arose early on Sunday. The question is, whether this was rising the third day, according to the prediction? I will refer the authorities made use of in this case to your memory, and add only one observation, to show that it was indeed the third day,

according as the people of the country reckoned. When Christ talked with the two disciples who knew him not, they gave him an account of his own crucifixion, and their disappointment; and tell him, "To-day is the third day since these things were done," (Luke xxiv. 21.) Now, this conversation was on the very day of the resurrection. And the disciples thought of nothing less than answering an objection against the resurrection, which as yet they did not believe. They recount only a matter of fact, and reckon the time according to the usage of their country, and call the day of the resurrection "the third day" from the crucifixion; which is a plain evidence in what manner the Jews reckoned in this and like cases.

As the objections in this case are founded on the story reported by the Jews, and the Roman soldiers, Mr. B. in his answer, endeavoured to show from some historical passages, that the Jews themselves did not believe the story.

His first argument was, that the Jews never questioned the disciples for this cheat, and the share they had in it, when they had them in their power. And yet who sees not that it was very much to their purpose so to do? To this there is no reply.

The second argument was from the treatment Paul had from king Agrippa, and his saying to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" a speech which he reckons could not be made by a prince, to one concerned in carrying on a known cheat. To this Mr. A. replies, that Agrippa never did become a Christian, and that no great stress is to be laid on his complaisance to his prisoner. But allowing that there was something of humanity and civility in the expression, yet such civility could hardly

be paid to a known impostor. There is a propriety even in civility. A prince may be civil to a rebel, but he will hardly compliment him for his loyalty; he may be civil to a poor sectary, but if he knows him to be a cheat, he will scarcely compliment him with hopes that he will be of his party.

The third argument was from the advice given by Gamaliel to the council of the Jews, to let the apostles alone, "for fear they themselves should be found to fight against God;" a supposition which the gentleman thinks absolutely inconsistent with his or the council's being persuaded, that the apostles were guilty of any fraud in managing the resurrection of Ghrist.

Mr. A. replies, that Gamaliel's advice respected only the numbers of people deceived; and was a declaration of his opinion, that it was not prudent to come to extremities till the people were in a better temper. This deserves consideration.

*First.* I observe that Gamaliel's words are express, "lest you be found to fight against God;" which reason respects God, and not the people. And the supposition is that the "hand of God" might possibly be in this work; a saying which could not have come from him, or have been received by the council, if they had believed the resurrection to have been a cheat.

*Secondly.* It is remarkable that the miracles wrought by the apostles after the death of Christ, those especially which occasioned the calling this council, had a much greater effect on the Jews than even the miracles of Christ himself. They held out against all the wonders of Christ, and were perpetually plotting his death, not doubting but that would put an end to their trouble; but

when after his death they saw the same powers continue with the apostles, they saw no end of the affair, but began to think in earnest there might be more in it than they were willing to believe. And on the report made to them of the apostles' works, they made serious reflection, "and doubted whereunto this would grow." And though in their anger and vexation of heart they thought of desperate remedies, and were for killing the apostles also; yet they hearkened willingly to Gamaliel's advice, which at another time might have been dangerous to the adviser. So that it appears from the history that the whole council had the same doubt that Gamaliel had, that possibly the hand of God might be in this thing. And could the Jews, if they had manifestly discovered the cheat of the resurrection a little time before, have entertained such a suspicion.

The last period commences at the resurrection, and takes in the evidence on which the credit of this fact stands.

The counsel for Woolston, among other difficulties, started one which if well grounded, excludes all evidence out of this case. The resurrection being a thing out of the course of nature, he thinks the testimony of nature, held forth to us in her constant method of working, a stronger evidence against the possibility of a resurrection, than any human evidence can be for the reality of one.

In answer to this, it is said, on the other side:

*First.* That a resurrection is a thing to be judged of by men's senses; and this cannot be doubted. We all know when a man is dead; and should he come to life again, we might judge whether he was alive or no, by the very same means by which we judge those about us to be living men.

*Secondly.* That the notion of a resurrection contradicts

no one principle of right reason, interferes with no law of nature; and that whoever admits that God gave man life at first, cannot possibly doubt of his power to restore it when lost.

*Thirdly.* That appealing to the settled course of nature is referring the matter in dispute, not to rules or maxims of reason and true philosophy, but to the prejudices and mistakes of men, which are various and infinite, and differ sometimes according to the climate men live in, because men form a notion of nature from what they see; and therefore in cold countries all men judge it to be according to the course of nature for water to freeze, in warm countries they judge it to be unnatural. Consequently, that it is not enough to prove anything to be contrary to the laws of nature, to say that it is usually or constantly to our observation otherwise. And therefore, though men in the ordinary course die, and do not rise again, (which is certainly a prejudice against the belief of a resurrection,) yet it is not an argument against the possibility of a resurrection.

Another objection was against the reality of the body of Christ after it came from the grave. These objections are founded on such passages as report his appearing or disappearing to the eyes of his disciples at pleasure; his coming in among them when the doors were shut; his forbidding some to touch him, his inviting others to do it; his having the very wounds whereof he died, fresh and open in his body, and the like. Hence the counsel concluded, that it was no real body which was sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, sometimes capable of being touched, sometimes incapable.

On the other side, it was answered that many of these

objections are founded on a mistaken sense of the passages referred to; particularly of the passage in which Christ is thought to forbid Mary Magdalene to touch him; of another, in which he calls to Thomas to examine his wounds; and probably of a third, relating to Christ's conversation with his disciples on the road without being known by them.

As to other passages which relate to his appearing and disappearing, and coming in when the doors were shut, it is said that no conclusion can be drawn from them against the reality of Christ's body; that these things might happen many ways, and yet the body be real, which is the only point to which the present objection extends; that there might be in this, and probably was, something miraculous, but nothing more wonderful than what happened on another occasion in his lifetime, where the gentleman who makes the objection allows him to have had a real body.

I mention these things but briefly, just to bring the course of the argument to your remembrance.

The next objection is taken from hence, that Christ did not appear publicly to the people, and particularly to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. It is said that his commission related to them in an especial manner, and that it appears strange that the main proof of his mission, the resurrection, should not be laid before them, but that witnesses should be picked and culled to see this mighty wonder. This is the force of the objection.

To which it is answered, *First*, That the particular commission to the Jews expired at the death of Christ; and therefore the Jews had on this account no claim for any particular evidence. And it is insisted that Christ before

his death declared the Jews should not see him till they were better disposed to receive him.

*Secondly.* That as the whole world had a concern in the resurrection of Christ, it was necessary to prepare a proper evidence for the whole world; which was not to be done by any particular satisfaction given to the people of the Jews, or their rulers.

*Thirdly.* That as to the chosen witnesses, it is a mistake to think that they were chosen as the only persons to see Christ after the resurrection; and that in truth many others did see him: but that the witnesses were chosen as proper persons to bear testimony to all people; an office to which many others who did see Christ, were not particularly commissioned: that making choice of proper and credible witnesses, was so far from being a ground of just suspicion, that it is in all cases the most proper way to exclude suspicion.

The next objection is pointed against the evidence of the angels, and the women. It is said that history reports that the women saw young men at the sepulchre; that they were advanced into angels, merely through the fear and superstition of the women; that at the best this is but a story of an apparition; a thing in times of ignorance much talked of, but in the days of knowledge never heard of.

In answer to this, it is said that the angels are not properly reckoned among the witnesses of the resurrection; they were not in the number of the chosen witnesses, or sent to bear testimony in the world; that they were indeed ministers of God appointed to attend the resurrection; that God has such ministers, cannot be reasonably doubted; nor can it be objected, that they were

improperly employed, or below their dignity, in attending on the resurrection of Christ ; that we believe them to be angels, not on the report of the women, but on the credit of the evangelist who affirms it ; that what is said of apparitions on this occasion, may pass for wit and ridicule, but yields no reason or argument.

The objection to the women was, I think, only that they were women, which was strengthened by calling them silly women.

It was answered, that women have eyes and ears as well as men, and can tell what they see and hear. And it happened in this case, that the women were so far from being credulous, that they believed not the angels, and hardly believed their own report. However, that the women are none of the chosen witnesses ; and if they were, the evidence of the men cannot be set aside, because women saw what they saw.

This is the substance of the objections and answers.

The counsel for the apostles insisted further, that they gave the greatest assurance to the world that possibly could be given, of their sincere dealing, by suffering all kinds of hardship, and at last death itself, in confirmation of the truth of their evidence.

The counsel for Woolston, in reply to this, told you, that all religions, whether true or false, have had their martyrs ; that no opinion, however absurd, can be named, but some have been content to die for it ; and then concluded, that suffering is no evidence of the truth of the opinions for which men suffer.

To clear this matter to you, I must observe how this case stands. You have heard often, in the course of this argument, that the apostles were witnesses chosen to bear

testimony to the resurrection ; and, for that reason, had the fullest evidence themselves of the truth of it ; not merely by seeing Christ once or twice after his death, but by frequent conversations with him for forty days together, before his ascension. That this was their proper business, appears plainly from history ; where we find, that to ordain an apostle was the same thing as “ ordaining one to be a witness of the resurrection.” Acts i. 22. If you look further, to the preaching of the apostles, you will find this was the great article insisted on. Acts ii. 22, &c. ; iii. 15 ; iv. 10 ; v. 30. And Paul knew the weight of this article, and the necessity of teaching it, when he said, “ If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain.” You see, then, that the thing which the apostles testified, and the thing for which they suffered, was the truth of the resurrection, which is a mere matter of fact.

Consider now how the objection stands. The counsel for Woolston tells you, that it is common for men to die for false opinions, and he tells you nothing but the truth. But even in those cases their suffering is an evidence of their sincerity ; and it would be very hard to charge men who die for the doctrine they profess, with insincerity in the profession. Mistaken they may be ; but every mistaken man is not a cheat. Now, if you will allow the suffering of the apostles to prove their sincerity, which you cannot well disallow, and consider that they died for the truth of a matter of fact which they had seen themselves, you will perceive how strong the evidence is in this case. In doctrines, and matters of opinion, men mistake perpetually ; and it is no reason for me to take up with another man’s opinion, because I am persuaded he is sincere in it. But when a man reports to me an uncom-

mon fact, yet such a one as in its own nature is a plain object of sense ; if I believe him not, it is not because I suspect his eyes, or his sense of feeling, but merely because I suspect his sincerity : for if I was to see the same thing myself, I should believe myself ; and therefore my suspicion does not arise from the inability of human senses to judge in the case, but from a doubt of the sincerity of the reporter. In such cases, therefore, there wants nothing to be proved, but only the sincerity of the reporter, and since voluntary suffering for the truth is at least a proof of sincerity, the sufferings of the apostles for the truth of the resurrection is a full and unexceptionable proof.

The counsel for Woolston was sensible of this difference ; and therefore he added, that there are many instances of men's suffering and dying in an obstinate denial of the truth of facts plainly proved. This observation is also true. I remember a story of a man who endured with great constancy all the tortures of the rack, denying the fact with which he was charged. When he was asked afterwards how he could hold out against all the tortures, he answered, I had painted a gallows on the toe of my shoe, and when the rack stretched me, I looked on the gallows, and bore the pain to save my life. This man denied a plain fact, under great torture ; but you see a reason for it. In other cases, when criminals persist in denying their crimes, they often do it, and there is reason to suspect they do it always, in hopes of a pardon or reprieve. But what are these instances to the present purpose ? All these men suffer against their will, and for their crimes ; and their obstinacy is built on the hope of escaping, by moving the compassion of the government.

Can the gentleman give any instances of persons who died willingly in attestation of a false fact? We have had in England some weak enough to die for the Pope's supremacy; but do you think a man could be found to die in proof of the Pope's being actually on the throne of England?

Now, the apostles died in asserting the truth of Christ's resurrection. It was always in their power to quit their evidence, and save their lives. Even their bitterest enemies, the Jews, required no more of them than to be silent. Acts iv. 17; v. 28. Others have denied facts, or asserted facts, in hopes of saving their lives, when they were under sentence of death; but these men attested a fact at the expense of their lives, which they might have saved by denying the truth. So that between criminals dying, and denying plain facts, and the apostles dying for their testimony, there is this material difference—criminals deny the truth in hopes of saving their lives, the apostles willingly parted with their lives rather than deny the truth.

We are come now to the last, and indeed the most weighty consideration.

The counsel for the apostles having in the course of the argument allowed, that more evidence is required to support the credit of the resurrection, it being a very extraordinary event, than is necessary in common cases, in the latter part of his defence sets forth the extraordinary evidence on which this fact stands. This is the evidence of the Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and power, which was given to the apostles, to enable them to confirm their testimony by signs and wonders, and mighty works. This part of the argument was well urged by the gentleman, and I need not repeat all he said.

The counsel for Woolston, in his reply, made two objections to this evidence.

The first was this: That the resurrection having all along been pleaded to be a matter of fact, and an object of sense, to recur to miracles for the proof of it, is to take it out of its proper evidence, the evidence of sense, and to rest it on a proof which cannot be applied to it; for the seeing of one miracle, he says, is no evidence that another miracle was wrought before it, as healing a sick man is no evidence that a dead man was raised to life.

To clear this difficulty, you must consider by what train of reasoning miracles come to be proofs in any case. A miracle of itself proves nothing, unless this only, that there is a cause equal to the producing the effect we see. Suppose you should see a man raise one from the dead, and he should go away and say nothing to you, you would not find that any fact, or any proposition, was proved or disproved by this miracle. But should he declare to you, in the name of him by whose power the miracle was wrought, that image worship was unlawful, you would then be possessed of a proof against image worship. But how? not because the miracle proves anything as to the point itself, but because the man's declaration is authorized by him who wrought the miracle in confirmation of his doctrine; and therefore miracles are directly a proof of the authority of persons, and not of the truth of things.

To apply this to the present case: If the apostles had wrought miracles, and said nothing of the resurrection, the miracles would have proved nothing about the resurrection one way or other. But when as eye-witnesses they attested the truth of the resurrection, and wrought miracles to confirm their authority, the miracles did not directly

prove the resurrection, but they confirmed and established beyond all suspicion the proper evidence, the evidence of eye-witnesses. So that here is no change of the evidence from proper to improper; the fact still rests on the evidence of sense, confirmed and strengthened by the authority of the Spirit. If a witness calls in his neighbours to attest his veracity, they prove nothing as to the fact in question, but only confirm the evidence of the witness. The case here is the same; though between the authorities brought in confirmation of the evidence there is no comparison.

The second objection was, that this evidence, however good it may be in its kind, is yet nothing to us. It was well, the gentleman says, for those who had it; but what is that to us who have it not?

To adjust this difficulty, I must observe to you, that the evidence now under consideration was not a private evidence of the Spirit, or any inward light like that which enthusiasts in our time pretend to, but an evidence appearing in the manifest and visible works of the Spirit; and this evidence was capable of being transmitted, and actually has been transmitted to us on unquestionable authority. And to allow the evidence to have been good in the first ages and not in this, seems to me to be a contradiction to the rules of reasoning; for if we see enough to judge that the first ages had reason to believe, we must needs see at the same time that it is reasonable for us also to believe. As the present question only relates to the nature of the evidence, it was not necessary to produce from history the instances to show in how plentiful a manner this evidence was granted to the church. Whoever wants this satisfaction may easily have it.

Gentleman of the jury, I have laid before you the substance of what has been said on both sides. You are now to consider it, and to give your verdict.

The jury consulted together, and the foreman rose up.

*Foreman.* My lord, we are ready to give our verdict.

*Judge.* Are you all agreed?

*Jury.* Yes.

*Judge.* Who shall speak for you?

*Jury.* Our foreman.

*Judge.* What say you? Are the apostles guilty of giving false evidence in the case of the resurrection of Jesus, or not guilty?

*Foreman.* Not guilty.

*Judge.* Very well. And now gentlemen, I resign my commission, and am your humble servant.

THE SEQUEL  
OF THE  
TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES  
OF THE  
RESURRECTION

BEING

An answer to the exceptions of a late pamphlet, entitled "The Resurrection of  
Jesus considered by a Moral Philosopher."

REVISED BY THE AUTHOR OF THE TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES.



## THE SEQUEL

OF

## THE TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES.

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THE considerer introduces himself and his book to the world in a very extraordinary and pompous manner. The Trial of the Witnesses had, it seems, gone through ten editions unanswered; had, (as he most ingeniously expresses himself,) “miraculously supported the miracles of the gospel; had gained an indisputable conquest, and reached the remotest corners of infidelity.” What then was to be done in this distress? Why, he is called on by his friends to read it, and by his ardent love of truth to answer it, and seems to think that all the hopes of infidelity centre in him.

An author of so much vivacity, and so full of himself, can hardly be expected to keep the dull road of reasoning; his wit will sometimes run away with him. Hence it is that we meet with so much pertness and spirit in his performance; hence proceed those beautiful expressions of “miraculously supported the miracles,” the “damnably bad” opinions of somebody or other, and the witty conceit of introducing ghosts “in white sheets and dark lanterns” into this serious argument. Of all which, and

many others of equal politeness, I take leave once for all, and give them up to be enjoyed by the author and his admirers without disturbance.

But I must needs commend this author for the open and frank declaration of his principles in respect to religion. Some have pretended friendship to the gospel that they might the more successfully undermine the foundations of it, but this author acts with more bravery and more honesty. He says fairly, "In my opinion great judgment and great faith are such contradictions that they never unite so as to meet in one person." I dare say he did not make this declaration on any suspicion he had of his own judgment. Again, with respect to miracles, he tells us "every real miracle is an absurdity to common sense and understanding, and contrary to the attributes of God."

After these express declarations, one would wonder how this author could propose himself to the world as a proper person to make a fair examination of the evidence of the resurrection, which is both the greatest miracle and the greatest article of the Christian faith. But he had his view in so doing, and has been so good as to acquaint us what he proposed by his answer to the Trial of the Witnesses, and he shall tell it himself. "My design is to promote that veneration for wisdom and virtue which has been debased and degraded by faith; by a faith which has not sent peace on earth, but a sword. Where this foolish faith bears sway, the tree of knowledge produces damning fruit; but under the benign influence of George our King in this glorious day of light and liberty, this divine hag and her pious witchcrafts, which were brought forth in darkness and nourished by obscurity, faint at the approach of day, and vanish on sight."

The faith which the gospel proposes in Christ Jesus, the ever blessed Son of God, and the only name under heaven by which we may be saved, is here, with an astonishing degree of impiety, called a "divine hag with pious witchcrafts." Unhappy man! what could he mean by this? I pity him from my heart. But what could he mean by abusing the king, unless he had a mind to show that he is just as good a subject as he is a Christian?

Every serious man will read these passages with abhorrence; and they are a warning to every reader to be on his guard against the representations made of the doctrines of the gospel and the evidences of Christianity by so determined and so inveterate an enemy to both.

Before I come to the points which more immediately affect the evidence of the resurrection, I shall take notice of one remark which the Considerer has dropped at the close of his introduction, and which relates to the credit of revelation in general.

It had been observed in the Trial, "that revelation is by the common consent of mankind the very best foundation of religion, and therefore every impostor pretends to it." In answer to which the Considerer says, "I conceive that which is the foundation of any, much less of every false religion, cannot be the foundation of the true." What poor sophistry is this! Cannot this great Considerer see the difference between a real and a pretended foundation? Let him try it in his own favorite virtue, sincerity. Sincerity is by common consent the very best foundation of a good character, and therefore all knaves pretend to it. Will the Considerer in this case say, that which is the foundation of every bad character cannot be the foundation of a good one? It is to no purpose to controvert

such points; and I think this passage from the Trial was produced only to give the Considerer an opportunity of entering into his darling common-place of abusing revelation, and drawing together what has been retailed a hundred times over by all the little traders in infidelity, and has been as often answered to the satisfaction of all sober inquirers.

The first point that more directly affects the credit of the resurrection is the nature and quality of the evidence. The Considerer begins with complaining grievously that all the evidence is on the side of the resurrection, and that he can find none against it; and this he thinks is a very hard case on him. "If the resurrection," says he, "be a fraud or the evidence forged, what books have we to prove it so?" This is indeed a hard case. But if he should take it into his head to prove that Cæsar was not killed in the senate-house, he might begin with the same complaint; for all the evidence would be on one side, and all against him.

But he imagines there was anciently a great stock of evidence against the truth of the resurrection, but that it has been unhappily lost or destroyed. "It is certain," he says, "books have been written by Porphyry, Celsus, and others, which contained what the Christians thought were best answered by stifling and burning. It is well known from some fragments of them in Origen, that they contradicted what is related in the evangelists." Who furnishes the Considerer with his learning I know not; but whoever he is, he has cheated him abominably. Fragments of Porphyry and Celsus in Origen! why Origen was dead before Porphyry set pen to paper. When Origen answered Celsus, Porphyry could not be above sixteen

years of age, and not above twenty or twenty-one when Origen died. I imagine by the order in which he places them, that he took Porphyry to be older than Celsus, and that Origen having written against Celsus, could but take notice of Porphyry too. But there was indeed about a hundred years between Celsus and Porphyry.

“Porphyry and Celsus,” he says, “contradicted what is related in the evangelists;” and so does the Considerer too; but what then? Is the credit of any history the worse, because it is wantonly contradicted, without evidence or authority of any sort to support the contradiction? The Considerer, I suspect, means to introduce Celsus and Porphyry as witnesses against the history of the gospel. If he does, he is mistaken. They were just such witnesses against the gospel as he is; and for want of evidence to contradict the evangelists, they were forced to rely on the disagreements which they supposed were to be found in the several accounts given by the evangelists.

Had there ever been good evidence against the gospel history, it could not have been lost in Celsus's time; for Celsus lived at no great distance from the apostolic age, at a time when all religions were tolerated but the Christian; when no evidence was stifled, no books destroyed but those of Christians. And yet Celsus laboured under the same want of evidence as Woolston and his auxiliaries, and had only the gospel to search (as Origen more than once observes) for evidence against the gospel. A strong proof that there never had been books of any credit in the world, that questioned the gospel facts, when so spiteful and so artful an adversary as Celsus made use of none.

Celsus admits the truth of Christ's miracles. The dif-

ference between him and Origen lies in the manner of accounting for them; the one ascribing them to the power of God, the other to the power of magic. So that if the Considerer will stand to the evidence of his own witness, the question will not be, whether the miracles are true in fact, (for that is granted on both sides,) but whether the truth of the miracles infers the divine authority of the performer. Now can it be supposed that Celsus would have admitted the miracles of Christ as real facts, had he not been compelled to it by the universal consent of all men in the age in which he lived?

But why does the Considerer complain for want of the assistance of Celsus, and lead his readers to imagine that the books of Celsus were destroyed because they could not be answered? Does he not know that there is hardly a plausible argument, produced by Woolston or himself, that is not borrowed from Celsus? The truth is, that the objections of Celsus are preserved, and preserved in his own language. Origen's answer is not a general reply to Celsus, but a minute examination of all his objections, even of those which appeared to Origen most frivolous; for his friend Ambrosius, to whom he dedicates the work, desires him to omit nothing. In order to this examination, Origen states the objections of Celsus in his own words; and that nothing might escape him, he takes them in the order in which Celsus had placed them. Celsus then, as it happens, is safe; and the Considerer needs not lament over him any more.

The case of Porphyry is different; there is little remaining of him, but some dispersed fragments to be found in Eusebius and Jerome. However, this is certain from the account remaining of him, that he had no evidence

against the gospel history but what the gospel itself furnished ; in which he thought he saw, or pretended to see, contradiction. How indeed should he have any other evidence, when Celsus had no other, who lived so much nearer the apostolic age than he did ?

If the Considerer is laying in a stock of evidence on the anti-christian side, he may put down in his list the Emperor Julian and the Talmudic books of the Jews, together with some others, whose evidence, such as it is, is still in being. Here then are witnesses against the apostles, the most determined enemies that Christianity ever had ; and yet the Considerer will find no reason to thank them for their evidence. They agree with Celsus in admitting the miracles, and so in truth serve only to support that cause which they meant to destroy.

The case then standing thus, the Considerer must be content to follow the steps of his great leaders, and search the gospel for objections against the gospel. This is another hardship, and the subject of another complaint : “ If the resurrection be a fraud, or the evidence forged, what books have we to prove it so ? Can it be expected that an equitable issue should be obtained from what may be fairly reasoned out of their own report ? ” If the Considerer had no better hopes, why did he trouble himself and the world ? Did he propose, because nothing could be fairly reasoned out of the gospel, to reason something out of it unfairly ? He has indeed done so, but did not, I suppose, mean to give warning of it.

But this is not the whole of his complaint. “ Can that,” says he, “ be esteemed a fair trial, where the evidences are only on one side the question,” &c. Why not ? Was full and clear evidence ever rejected, because there was

no evidence to be produced against it? The case must always be so where the truth is notorious. The main facts relating to our Saviour were as public and as well known in Judea and the neighbouring countries, when the gospels were published, as the coronation of Henry VIII. was known in his time in England; and if the Considerer has a mind to call that fact in question, he will find the witnesses all on one side.

He goes on: "To find the truth of a case by the testimony of partial evidence combined against it, must be owned to be a difficult task."

In the first place, how does he know the witnesses are partial? It is not a thing to be taken for granted; and proof he brings none. I imagine he supposes every witness to be partial to the side for which he gives evidence; and if so, then every faithful witness to truth is a partial evidence; and the more sincerely concerned for the truth, the more partial still.

Secondly, why does he call the evangelists combined witnesses? Is it not the purpose and drift of his whole book to show them contradicting one another in almost every instance? How then were they combined together? Was it part of their agreement to contradict one another? Why did he not tell us what was their view in combining together? We know that they were oppressed by Jews and heathens, that they attested the truth of the facts they delivered at the peril of their lives daily, and at last died miserably and violently in confirmation of the truth. You see what their combination tended to!

Another question the Considerer has chosen to debate, is about the nature of Christ's kingdom. It very little concerns the resurrection, but we must take it in our

way. Many passages are produced from the Trial, all speaking to this effect, "that Jesus did not pretend to a temporal kingdom, and that he expounded the ancient prophecies relating to the Messiah in a different manner than his countrymen did, who expected a temporal prince for their Messiah." Among these quotations some are taken out of the mouth of the pleader against the resurrection, and ascribed to the author of the Trial; but this happens so frequently, that it would be endless to take notice of it as often as it occurs. But let us see to what purpose these passages are produced.

It was a part of Woolston's scheme to charge Christ with a secret design of getting temporal power, notwithstanding he openly disavowed all such pretensions. In answer to this the author of the Trial showed, from the uniform character and conduct of Jesus, that Woolston's notion was void of all colour of support. Does the Considerer now enter into the argument as it stands in the Trial? No. But he takes the passages independently of the argument of which they are a part, and thinks that taken by themselves they are not true. Be it so; what then does it signify to the fact of the resurrection which he was to disprove? Why all this parade of many quotations from the Trial, since they do not relate to the point in dispute? Some good friend, I suspect, had asked the Considerer these questions, which he could not answer, and though he was unwilling to part with so many quotations at once, yet to prevent the same questions being asked him again, he has in his new edition confessed that "be this (that is, the ancient prophecies of the kingdom) mystically or conditionally true, it concerns not the resurrection. Yet let not truth be denied."

Well, then, the credit of the resurrection is so far safe. But he thinks it not true that Christ declined temporal power, and truth must not be denied. He goes on to produce prophecies that God would give him the throne of his father David, and says that he was called king of Israel, king of the Jews, and rebuked not those who gave him the title. And why should he rebuke them, since he claimed that title, and never denied that he was king of the Jews? But the Considerer seems not to know that there never was a question between Jews and Christians, whether Jesus was or pretended to be a temporal prince. Both sides agree that he neither was nor pretended to be. But the question was and is, whether, according to ancient prophecy, the Messiah was to be a temporal prince. Had not the prophets declared him to be a great prince, there would have been no dispute whether he was to be a temporal or spiritual prince. Quoting therefore these prophecies will not determine the question; for the doubt is not whether there are such prophecies or no, but what is the meaning of them.

The Considerer says that "Jesus was commonly called king of the Jews, only he had not the kingdom; therefore, when he was about to suffer for it, he found it was not of this world. This confession he prudently made at a proper time, though it had not the effect to save his life." After what has already appeared of this author's spirit, it is in vain to complain of the impiety of this charge of fraud and deceit on our blessed Saviour. There is one to whom he must answer for it. In the meantime, how will he answer to reasonable inquirers the disingenuousness of concealing that Jesus, so far from denying himself to be the king of the Jews, confessed it before

Pilate? Matt. xxix. 11. Mark xv. 2. Luke xxiii. 3. John xviii. 37. And as to the nature of this kingdom, he declared it "not to be of this world." John xviii. 36. With what conscience now does the Considerer ask, "how it appears by anything recorded that Jesus explained away the kingly office of the Messiah." Explain it away! No. He insisted on it to the last. But if he means to ask whether Jesus ever explained away the temporal kingdom, it is manifest from every part and every circumstance of his life that he never claimed it. If he means to ask whether Jesus ever explained the nature of the kingdom of the Messiah, what more is wanting than his confession to Pilate, that he was king of the Jews, and that his "kingdom was not of this world?" Was it not sufficiently declaring that the ancient prophecies, which foretold the kingdom of the Messiah, did not mean a temporal kingdom?

But if Christ did not pretend to temporal power, the Considerer says, "why was the government alarmed, and Jesus looked upon as a person dangerous to the state, who was the best friend among the Jews the Roman government had, to preserve the people from enthusiastic seditions? If this be true, it was the worst policy in the world for the Romans to put him to death." The Considerer here has by chance deviated into more truth than he was aware of. Jesus was indeed the very person proper to preserve the people from enthusiastic seditions, and so far a friend to the Roman government. But who told him the Roman government was alarmed? Why, he has it from the Trial; but according to custom has taken the objector's words for the words of the author of the Trial. And the Considerer would not have argued on this

supposition, had he attended in the least to the gospel history. Where does he read that the Roman government was alarmed, and thought Jesus a person dangerous to the state? Where does he find that the Roman government persecuted him to death? The Jewish government indeed did; but Pilate came unwillingly into their measures, and consented not to his death till overborne by clamour and sedition.

What the Considerer had in view in this confused discourse about Christ's kingdom, I cannot guess. He seems to think Jesus understood the prophecies to relate to a temporal kingdom, and in consequence claimed it, and that he did not renounce a kingdom of this world, till driven to it by despair and necessity. But where did he learn this secret? Not from the gospel history, nor yet from any enemies of the gospel, whether Jews or heathens, who never have charged Jesus with setting up for temporal power. The Jews object to him the want of temporal power, which they imagine their Messiah is to exercise in the fullest extent, but never accuse him for pretending to it. One would imagine it impossible for any one, who had read the four gospels, or any one of them, to entertain this conceit.

Look into the gospel; every page will afford a proof that Jesus, though he claimed to be the king of the Jews foretold in the ancient prophets, yet disclaimed all temporal power and greatness. When one of the scribes offered to become his disciple, what encouragement did he find? Possibly this scribe might conceive hopes of having a share in the temporal kingdom, which he and his countrymen expected. But our Lord undeceives him, and tells him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air

have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Matt. viii. 20.

When our Lord sent out his twelve disciples, he orders them expressly "to preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. x. 7. In order, then, to establish this kingdom, what power does he give them? Were they to issue out proclamations notifying that the victorious prince was come, and calling on all his subjects to arm, and to attend him? Nothing less. He gives them "power against unclean spirits," and "to heal all diseases." Matt. x. 1. But as to their condition in this world, he tells them they should "be brought before governors" (Matt. x. 18) for his sake, and "be hated of all men" (Matt. x. 22), and advises them for their safety, "when persecuted in one city to flee to another." Matt. x. 23. Are these proofs of his claiming temporal power?

In like manner, and with like commission, he sent out the seventy disciples. They return with great joy and relate to him their success: "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke x. 17, 18. You see it was the kingdom of Satan he came to destroy, and not the kingdom of Cæsar.

The apostles were in the same mistake with the rest of their countrymen, and expected a temporal kingdom; and the sons of Zebedee were early solicitors to be first ministers. Our Lord corrects their error, and tells them his kingdom was a very different thing from the kingdoms of the world. "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them. But so it shall not be among you; but whosoever would be great among you, shall be your minister." Mark x. 42, 43.

The Considerer thinks no regard is to be had to our Lord's confession before Pilate. Let us see then whether he had not made the same declaration to the rulers of the Jews before, and when he was in no immediate danger.

The rulers of the Jews very well knew that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews foretold by the ancient prophets ; and being possessed with an opinion that their wished-for king was to be a temporal prince, they were greatly scandalized at his pretensions to be king of the Jews, in whom they could discover no power or inclination to deliver them from the Roman yoke. They determine therefore to put him to the proof, and to force him either to declare against the Roman government, or to renounce his pretensions to the kingdom of Israel. The Pharisees and Herodians address him with profound respect, the better to cover their ensnaring question, " Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth ; neither carest thou for any man, for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore what thinkest thou ? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not ?" Matt. xxii. 16, 17. Had our Lord declared against the Roman power, they would have had matter of accusation against him. Had he declared for it, he would in their opinion have renounced his claim to be the king of the Jews, and given them an opportunity of inflaming the people against him, who could not bear the thought that the king of the Jews should be subject to the king of the Romans. But he " perceived their wickedness, and said, Show me the tribute money. When they showed a penny, he asked, Whose is this image and superscription ? They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and

unto God the things that are God's." Could a clearer answer be given to show that the kingdom to be set up by God and the kingdom of Cæsar were consistent together, without interfering with each other, since the Jews might pay obedience to both, without offending either? And if the kingdom to be set up by God according to ancient prophecies, was to submit to the kingdom of Cæsar, it is manifest it could not be a temporal kingdom, nor the prince of that kingdom such a victorious prince as the scribes and pharisees expected. Is not then this answer to the Pharisees and Herodians the very same thing with our Lord's confession before Pilate, that he was indeed king of the Jews, but his kingdom was not of this world?

I will refer the reader but to one passage more on this head. In Matt. xxi. our Lord, in a parable, shows the rulers of the Jews that the kingdom they expected would, for their wicked and obstinate behaviour, be taken from them; a hard lesson for them to learn who expected to conquer the world, when once their kingdom was come! It is said expressly, ver. 45, that the chief priests and pharisees "perceived that he spake of them, and sought to lay hands on him."

The author of the Trial had said that Jesus fell into disgrace with his countrymen, and suffered for opposing their notions of a victorious Messias. To which the Considerer says, "I believe it cannot be proved that Jesus suffered for this cause." Very concise! but what conceit must he have of his own opinion, if he thinks it ought to pass without proof for a sufficient answer to such evidence?

The next question started by the Considerer is, "whether Christ foretold his own death and resurrection;" and he

is willing to think he did not, but for no other reason that I can find, but because the author of the Trial asserts that he did. The Considerer had observed before, "that the conquest the Trial seems to have over Mr. Woolston, was occasioned by his granting too much;" and he is determined to avoid this fault and to grant nothing. "I am not sure," says he, "that Jesus did foretell his own death and resurrection, only that the evangelists say he did; nor that he referred to the authority of ancient prophecies, to prove that the Messiah was to die and rise again, only that I read so." What does all this amount to? Has he not manifestly given up this point to the author of the Trial? for what did that author undertake more than to show from the evangelists that Christ foretold his death and resurrection? and the Considerer admits that the evangelists indeed tell him so. One would think now the dispute over. No: the Considerer will not take their word. Well, then, what proof has he to the contrary? None; he pretends to none; but is determined not to believe them. I admire at his modesty in calling his book an Answer to the Trial only; he might with as good reason have called it an answer to all that ever was or ever will be published in defence of Christianity; for all depends on the credit of the gospel history.

But he says the evangelists report prophecies which were never delivered; and this he proves from the concession of the author of the Trial. But this piece of management (hardly to be called by so soft a name as a mistake) has been taken notice of before, to which I refer the reader.

Let us then examine this question, whether Christ foretold his death and resurrection.

1. The Considerer maintains that the chief priests and rulers of the Jews never heard of any prediction of the death and resurrection of Christ, and hence infers that they had no pretence for guarding the sepulchre, and consequently that the account given by Matthew of guarding and sealing the sepulchre is all forgery.

2. He admits that Christ five times foretold his death and resurrection to his disciples, and that in so plain a manner that it was impossible for them not to understand him clearly. But it appearing in the history of the gospel that they did not understand him, he infers that there were no such predictions, but that they are mere forgery.

As he allows the five predictions to the disciples to be clear and express, there is nothing wanting under this head but to account for what is said in the gospel, that the disciples did not understand what was said to them, which will be considered in due time.

As to the Jews, whether they had any reason to apprehend that Christ might probably prove a prophet, and rise from the dead, must appear not only from the predictions said to be given them, but from what they could not avoid knowing—the many miracles done in his lifetime ; for it is the character of the person in this case that gives weight to the prediction. The author of the Trial put it on this foot. “It must necessarily be that they had discovered something in the life and actions of Christ which raised this jealousy, and made them listen to a prophecy in this case, which in any other they would have despised. For had the Jews been persuaded that he performed no wonders in his life, they would not have been afraid of seeing any done by him after his death.”

The Considerer, in answer to this reasoning, resorts in

the first place to his usual charge, that the account given of the apprehension the Jews were under, and their concern to guard the sepulchre, is all forgery. But out of this forged account he has taken two words, which pass with him for authentic history. The Jews say unto Pilate, "Sir, we remember that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." Now the Considerer says the Jews never applied to Pilate; but the whole relation, every word of it, is a cheat—excepting only the words *that deceiver*; and from thence he argues thus: "The chief priests and pharisees believed Jesus to be a deceiver, if we take their opinion from their own words, viz: 'we remember that deceiver said.'" From this lame, crippled, and at best misrepresented piece of history, the Considerer draws a consequence which is to stand against the united authority of all the gospels, viz: that the Jews were persuaded he performed no wonders in his life.

What now is to be done? Must I transcribe great part of the gospels to confute so shameless an assertion? I would hope that no Christian is so unacquainted with the history of Christ as to want any assistance in this case. But, however, to give satisfaction to all who are willing to receive it, I will produce some few passages in which the scribes, pharisees, and chief priests themselves, were either eye-witnesses of the miracles, or appear fully acquainted with them.

On our Lord's first appearance, and "healing all manner of diseases among the people, his fame went through all Syria; and there followed him great multitudes of the people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan." Matt.

iv. 23, &c. Is it possible when all the country was thus alarmed with the miracles, that the chief priests and rulers should be the only persons unacquainted with them? Many of his miracles were performed in public places of resort, in presence of the scribes and Pharisees, "and they took counsel against him, how they might destroy him." Matt. xii. 10, &c. But so far were they from denying that miracles were wrought, that they endeavour to account for them: "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Matt. xii. 24. In the very temple itself, "the blind and the lame came to him, and he healed them." Matt. xxi. 14. And it follows immediately, "When the chief priests and Pharisees saw the wonderful things that he did, they were sore displeased." When our Lord healed the blind man who sat begging by the way, the Pharisees had the blind man before them, and his parents also, and examined them strictly as to his miraculous cure. John ix. And after all their inquiry they were forced to admit the truth of the miracle, however unwilling they were to admit the divine power of Jesus. The scribes were witnesses to the cure wrought on one sick of the palsy, in the presence of a great multitude. Mark ii. 6. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees debate in council, what was to be done on it: "What do we, for this man doth many miracles?" John xi. 47.

It would be endless to produce all the passages of Scripture that speak to the same purpose. These already cited will enable the reader to apply the rest, which so frequently occur.

The question now is, what effect these miracles had on the scribes and chief priests. That they were extremely

alarmed appears plainly, and that they sought his life, as the only method to stop the influence he gained over the people, is notorious. But were they clear of all doubts themselves? Had they no misgivings of mind, that he might possibly be what he pretended to be? Consider their behaviour after they had secured his person, and carried him before Pilate: they accuse him of many things, and among the rest of sedition against the Roman government. Had they believed it themselves, what need of further examination? What occasion had they to inquire of a cheat and an impostor, whether he was the Christ of God or no? And yet the chief priests made this inquiry with the utmost concern and solemnity: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God." Matt. xxvi. 63. Had the chief priests no suspicion, no jealousy that he might be the Christ, when he made this solemn adjuration to him? Would he have used the same form to the same purpose to Barabbas or any other common malefactor? The thing speaks for itself, and shows the anxiety of mind under which the chief priest acted, and how far he was from being satisfied that Jesus was an impostor and a deceiver.

When our blessed Lord hung on the cross, the chief priests and elders recovered spirit and said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Matt. xxvii. 42. He saved others! What! do they mean that he never wrought any miracles, as the Considerer supposes? Quite otherwise: they acknowledge his miracles by which others were saved, referring (it is probable) to his raising the dead; but they imagined now they had found the extent of his power, and that he could not save himself. It will perhaps be said this was mockery. Be it so: there was

no mockery in saying, "he saved others;" the insult is expressed in the other part, "himself he cannot save." They go on with their mockery: "If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross." But why all this triumph in being delivered from the king of Israel? Had they never suspected that he might possibly prove so indeed, what occasion for this sudden joy and exultation?

But this mirth did not last long. When Christ died, nature seemed to die with him; "there was darkness over all the earth, the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." Luke xxiii. 44, 45. The Roman centurion was so affected with it, that "he glorified God, saying, This was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned," (verses 47, 48.) In what manner the chief priests and scribes behaved on this occasion, we are not told. Probably they withdrew silently, unwilling to discover any fear or apprehension before the people. But could they be unaffected? If ever they had heard of our Lord's prophecy, that he would rise again, could they help remembering it now? They had seen him expire on the cross, but that was no ease to their minds in reflecting on the prophecy of his resurrection: for he had foretold his death and the manner of it, as well as his resurrection. The first part they had seen accomplished, and had reason to fear the last would be so.

Lay these things together: the chief priests had been witnesses of his power to work miracles in his lifetime; they knew he claimed to be king of the Jews; they knew he had owned to Pilate that he was king of the Jews; and under a most solemn adjuration from the chief priest, even

when he was his prisoner, he had confessed that he was the Christ, the Son of God, and that they should see him again coming in glory. They had heard him even on the cross maintain his character, and promise paradise to the penitent thief; they saw the sun darkened, the veil of the temple rent; the Roman guard at the cross, and all the spectators astonished. Surrounded with this amazing scene, could they despise the predictions of his resurrection? Could they remember them without great apprehensions that they might prove true? Whoever can suppose it, not only contradicts the express declaration of the gospel history, but shows himself to be but little acquainted with the sentiments of human nature.

But here the Considerer stops again. He says, "he finds no account where or when such public prophecy was delivered before the priests and Pharisees in any of the four evangelists." But what if such prophecies were delivered before others, and reported by persons of credit to the chief priests and Pharisees, will not that be sufficient? He thinks not; but all the reason he has for thinking so is, because they say to Pilate, "We remember that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." "Now," says he, "the words *we remember* signify that they heard him say so." It is very hard work to be obliged to defend, against such a writer, not only common sense, but common language. Where does he learn that the word *remember* is never used but of things spoken directly to ourselves? Cannot a man remember what he reads and what is reported to him? The chief priests do not say, "We remember he said *to us*," but "we remember he said, while he was yet alive;" but to whom he said it, or how it came to their knowledge, they do not say.

The Considerer thinks the Jews could not possibly understand what our Saviour said of the sign of Jonas to relate to his resurrection. I differ entirely with him; and though I do not suppose our Saviour did intend it as a clear prophecy to be understood at the time it was spoken, yet the words used came so near to a description of a resurrection, that if once the Jews became at all apprehensive of a resurrection, they could not but apply our Saviour's words to it. But be this as it will; let us examine whether the chief priests and scribes had not other ways of coming to the knowledge of what they affirm that Jesus said in his lifetime, "After three days I will rise again."

The Considerer admits that our Lord did five times foretell to his disciples that he should die and rise again the third day. So plain and clear he takes these predictions to be, that he cannot believe there is any truth in the gospel, when it tells us the disciples understood them not. But though they did not understand the meaning of the prophecy, for reasons to be given hereafter, yet they understood the language or the import of the words; or else what did Peter (if he understood not the words) reprove his Lord for, when he foretold this event? If they understood the literal sense of the words spoken to them, they might report them, and others understand the meaning, though they did not. And thus at least the chief priests might come to know that Jesus had foretold his resurrection.

But the Considerer seems to suppose that these predictions were private, given to the apostles only, and that they were enjoined secrecy; and for the sake of his argument he is willing for once to suppose the apostles to act

honestly, and to keep the secret ; and consequently that the report of these prophecies could not reach the chief priests. But his reasoning is founded on two mistakes ; for, first, it does not appear that all the five predictions were made to the apostles only ; secondly, it is plain, in the gospel history, secrecy was not enjoined with respect to these predictions.

A little attention to the history will clear up these facts.

We read in Luke of Christ's disciples, before ever he had chosen apostles ; and it is said expressly, (Luke vi. 13,) " He called his disciples to him, and out of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles." And at ver. 17, they are distinguished from the company of the disciples who attend him. His twelve disciples or apostles are sent out to preach. Luke ix. 1. Seventy other disciples are sent with like commission. Luke x. 1. These last were disciples, though not apostles. This being the case, there is no reason to conclude that when the gospel tells us that our Lord made any declaration to his disciples, such declaration was made to the apostles only. And it is observable that when the evangelists intend to distinguish the apostles from other disciples, they call them either apostles, or the twelve, and not simply disciples. Thus, Luke ix. 1, " When he had called the twelve disciples, he gave them power," &c. Matthew likewise denotes by the same character " his twelve disciples ;" x. 1, and in the following verse calls them apostles. In the sixth of John the distinction is most evident ; at verse 66, we read, " From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." It follows : " Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away ?" The disciples then present at our Lord's

discourse were more, probably many more than the apostles. It is not therefore necessarily to be concluded that, when our Saviour foretold his resurrection to his disciples, none were present but the twelve apostles.

Let us now take the predictions as they are ranged by the Considerer. The first is made to the disciples, Matt. xvi. 13, 21, &c.; Mark viii. 27, 31; Luke ix. 18, 22; the second only to Peter, James, and John; Matt. xvii. 1, 9; Mark ix. 2, 9. the third to his disciples; Matt. xvii. 19, 22; Mark ix. 29, 31; and the fourth and fifth were to the twelve apostles only. Matt. xx. 17, &c.; Mark x. 32, &c.; Luke xvii. 31, &c.; Matt. xxvi. 20, 32; Mark xiv. 17, 28. And it is observable that all the evangelists who mention the second prediction, take care to inform us that it was given to Peter, James, and John only; and all who report the fourth and fifth, say expressly it was given to the twelve only. How comes it then to pass that, in reporting the first and third, they leave it at large, and tell us that these predictions were made to the disciples? Is there not reason to suppose that they were made to more than to the twelve, who in the other instances are distinguished as the only persons present?

The Considerer observes on the third prediction, that Mark says, "he passed through Galilee, and would not that any man should know it, for he taught his disciples, The son of man is delivered, &c., and shall rise the third day." Mark ix. 30, &c. On which the Considerer says, "Observe—the reason why Jesus desired privacy was, because he told this to his disciples, and would have nobody else know it." That our Saviour told this to the disciples and not to the multitude, is admitted. But the

question is who these disciples were, whether the twelve only, or others together with them ; and the Considerer's observation is of no moment towards determining this point.

I do not pretend to affirm that the twelve may not be sometimes meant where disciples only are mentioned without any other distinction ; but, for the reasons given, the Considerer has no right to take it for granted that all the predictions were given to the twelve only, and to raise speculations on this supposition.

Had the Considerer known, what a due attention to the gospels would have taught him, the reason of our Lord's opening to his disciples and apostles the sufferings he was to undergo, he would not have suspected any deceit in his conduct. When our Saviour gathered disciples at first, and out of them chose twelve apostles, he sent them out to preach that the kingdom was at hand, and gave them great power over unclean spirits and all diseases. After some time he inquires of them, what the world thought of him : they report to him the different opinions the country had of him. He then asks, " But who say ye that I am ?" Peter, in the name of the rest, answers, " Thou art the Christ." On which he began immediately (as the three evangelists expressly observe) to teach them what things the Son of man should suffer, and that he should rise on the third day. Consider now what was the connection between Peter's confession, and the prediction of the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, which so closely followed it. The disciples had preached the approach of the kingdom ; had found, by the powers bestowed on them, what power their master had ; and our Lord now perceived, on the confession of Peter, that they

took him to be the Christ. He well understood what consequence this notion would produce; he knew the opinion of the Jews in general, and of the disciples too, was, "that Christ abideth for ever," John xii. 34, and was to be subject to no power, but to exercise power and dominion without end, which they likewise apprehended to be temporal power and dominion. Our Lord who took all proper occasions to disclaim temporal power, found it necessary now to guard the conduct of his disciples, who were very likely to give umbrage to the Jews, by the hopes they themselves conceived of seeing their Master a great temporal prince. To prevent these ill effects, he charges them, in the first place, to tell no man that he was the Christ; for such open declaration to the people, considering what notion they had of the Christ they expected, would have amounted to a claim of temporal power. In the next place, to moderate the expectations of his disciples, and to beat down the pride and vanity which would naturally arise from them, he tells them he was to suffer many things, and even death itself; but at the same time, to keep them from absolute despair, he gives them to understand that he should rise again.

This doctrine he began to teach on the occasion mentioned, as the evangelists particularly remark, intimating that it was frequently repeated and inculcated. So little were the disciples prepared to receive it, that Peter rebuked his Master for talking about suffering: "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee," Matt. xvi. 22; which explains another passage in the following chapter, very much abused by the Considerer, where our Saviour foretells again, "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men; they shall kill him, and

the third day he shall rise again. And they were exceeding sorrowful." Matt. xvii. 22, 23. He subjoins to this a passage from Mark, where our Saviour tells the disciples, "The Son of Man must be killed, and after he is killed, he shall rise again the third day:" and they understood not that saying. Mark ix. Hear now the Considerer: "It is equally strange," says he, "that they should be sorry for what they did not understand, as that they should not understand what they were sorry for." Was ever anything so perverse? Is it not plain they were sorry to hear how much he was to suffer; and that the saying which they did not understand was his "rising again from the dead?" They could not conceive how Christ could die, nor what could be meant by his rising again. Is there any inconsistency in this? None, but to such as are wilfully blind.

Our Saviour found it necessary, on this occasion, not only to acquaint his disciples with the sufferings he was to submit to, but the people also, in order to prevent their having wrong notions of him and his kingdom, should they hear or suspect him to be the Christ; and therefore he adds immediately, "He called the people unto him, with his disciples, and said, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Mark ix. 34. So far was our Lord from making a secret of his sufferings, or giving the people any hopes of a temporal deliverance!

But the Considerer supposes that the apostles were enjoined secrecy, and forbid to publish these predictions; on the strength of which suppositions he argues that the chief priests could know nothing of these predictions. The apostles are indeed enjoined secrecy, not with respect

to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but with respect expressly to this point only, that he was the Christ. Matthew has so determined this, that there can be no doubt; "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Matt. xvi. 20. After the transfiguration, that the disciples who had seen his surprising glory, should not from thence raise false notions of his power, he thought proper to enjoin them secrecy till after the resurrection; but secrecy in what? Not that he was to suffer and to rise again, but secrecy with respect to the glorious vision they had seen and the voice from the cloud, which proclaimed him "Christ, the Son of God."

Lay now these things together, and consider whether it was not probable that the chief priests had perfect intelligence even of these predictions. Our Saviour never made a secret of them; and as some of them were delivered to his disciples in general, and many of his disciples forsook him, (as we read in the sixth of John,) the chief priests, who were very inquisitive into the conduct of Jesus, might, by report from the apostles themselves, or at least by report from those disciples who forsook him, have perfect knowledge of these prophecies. But let us go on to other prophecies. The Considerer says he has examined John, and finds that he says not a word of it, but denies it all. If he says not a word of it, I would fain know in what words he denies it all. But these beauties occur too frequently to be attended to. As to his examination of John, I am by no means willing to rely on it, and must beg leave to examine after him. But how comes he to be so surprised to find the prophecies of Christ's death and resurrection so plainly contained in other gospels, omitted in John? Did he never hear that John, who out-

lived the other evangelists, was desired by the bishops of Asia to publish a gospel, to perfect and complete the relation of Christ's life and doctrine? They had without question heard many things of him not recorded by the other evangelists, and thought it of great importance to the Christian Church to have them transmitted to posterity with the authority of an apostle. John therefore wrote his gospel, not with a design of repeating what the other evangelists had fully delivered, but chiefly to preserve the memory of what they had omitted. These prophecies, therefore, being (as the Considerer admits) so very clearly contained in the other gospels, was the very reason why John omitted them. Whoever with tolerable care compares John with the other gospels will find this to be frequently the case; and it will appear plainly to be so in the history of the women who went first to the sepulchre, which there will be occasion soon to consider.

But though John, for the reason already given, has omitted expressly to repeat the predictions mentioned by the other evangelists, yet I own it would be surprising to find no mention made by Christ in his lifetime of the circumstances of his death and resurrection, considering how many discourses of our Lord to his disciples and others are reported in John's gospel. Let us inquire then.

In the twelfth and following chapters, a great part of our Lord's discourses to his disciples plainly refers to the predictions he had given them of his death and resurrection. "The hour is come," says our Lord, "when the Son of Man should be glorified." John xii. 23. Of what hour he speaks appears, (ver. 27,) "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." And at

chap. xiii. 1—"And when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world," &c. The expression made use of by Jesus, "the hour is come," supposes the disciples had notice before, that such an hour was to be expected. If so, these passages have reference to the predictions recorded in the other gospels; if not, they are of themselves predictions at least of his death. That our Lord himself meant these as predictions is manifest in chap. xiii. 19, where, having said that Judas should betray him, he adds, "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." Having given them this notice of his death, he endeavours to support their spirits under the expectation of it; "Let not your heart be troubled—I go to prepare a place for you." John xiv. 1, 2. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." ver. 18. "Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." xvi. 22. "A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me." ver. 16. These, and many other like passages in John, relate plainly to the death and resurrection of Christ, of which, if you take the Considerer's word, John has said nothing. So far were these predictions from being delivered as secrets to the apostles, that John informs us he foretold his sufferings to many others. When Nicodemus came to him, he tells him, "that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." John iii. 14. The same thing in the same language, is said to the people. viii. 28. The Considerer will say, Here is another riddle; what are we to understand by lifting up? Can you have a better interpreter than John him-

self? He will tell you that our Lord used this expression, "signifying what death he should die." xii. 33. And that the language was well understood at the time, appears by the answer the people made him: "We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up?" ver. 34. In consequence of this prediction he tells the Pharisees, "Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come." vii. 33, 34. Take now these sayings of John, and apply them to the sign of Jonas, and the exposition of it given by our Lord, that the Son of Man should be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," and they will give light to each other, supposing the Jews to have had no clearer predictions of Christ's death and resurrection before them. But that they had clearer, has, I think, already appeared.

But there is still one way more by which this intelligence could come to them. The last prophecy of his death and resurrection was given at his last supper to the twelve apostles: Judas was at the supper, and heard the prophecy, and went directly to the chief priests to concert measures for apprehending Jesus. Can you imagine that they did not inquire where his Master was, and what he was doing? Can you imagine that Judas would omit to entertain them with an account of the despair in which he left him, prophesying of his death, which he found unavoidable, and filling his disciples' heads with a silly notion of his rising again? If it is natural to suppose this to have been the case, you see a plain way by which the chief priests came to know that Jesus said in his lifetime, "that he would rise after three days."

The Considerer having proved, as he supposes, that the chief priests knew nothing of any prophecy of a resurrection, makes use of it to charge Matthew with a forgery, in the story he relates of their guarding the sepulchre. "Can any man of common sense think it probable that the priests and Pharisees should be alarmed about the resurrection of Jesus, if they never heard anything more of it than has been mentioned?" Whether the chief priests were as unacquainted with the prophecies of the resurrection as he supposes, must be left to the reader on what has been already said.

But the Considerer has other objections against the story told by Matthew of guarding the sepulchre, which must be attended to. "It is strange that Jesus should so expressly foretell his resurrection to his disciples, and say nothing plainly of it to the scribes and Pharisees, yet that they should be so alarmed with the words of a man they did not believe, as to watch for it, and the disciples not understand or expect it." In stating this case the Considerer takes it for granted that the scribes and Pharisees had no notice of a resurrection, but from the dark intimations to them that the sign of Jonas, &c., should be given them. If I have given the reader satisfaction that the case was otherwise, and that the scribes and Pharisees were apprized of much clearer and more express prophecies of the resurrection, there will be no occasion to give any further account of their solicitude in guarding the sepulchre. But one question still remains: how came the disciples not to understand these prophecies, and to have no expectation of a resurrection? The fact is admitted, and we are called on to give an account of their behaviour.

There is, I think, but one way of accounting for the actions of men; which is by comparing them with their opinions and persuasions, and the circumstances they were in at the time of doing such actions; and considering what men under such circumstances and such persuasions would naturally do. And in this method a very reasonable account may be given, both of the conduct of the rulers of the Jews and of the disciples.

Consider now: it was the general and firm persuasion of all the Jews, of the rulers and disciples equally, that the Christ, whenever he came, "was to abide for ever;" to be a prince of power, to subdue his and his country's enemies with uninterrupted success. This proposition, therefore, "that the Christ should die," according to the Jewish notion, contained an absolute absurdity. Now the disciples were strong in this opinion, that Jesus was the Christ; they were confirmed in it by every fresh instance of power and authority which they saw him exert. Our Lord was sensible how this opinion would operate, and therefore, from the time that he found they believed him to be the Christ, he began to preach to them what he was to suffer, and that he was to die and rise again. How they received these declarations appears from Peter's rebuking our Lord for making them, and from many other instances which need not be particularly referred to. Add to this, that all their hopes, all their expectations depended on their Master's being a powerful prince. So that to think of his dying was contrary to all they believed of Christ, and contrary to all they hoped for themselves. To overcome all their prejudices and all their passions at once was more than they were able to do. The prophecies spoke so plainly of the sufferings of Christ, that they were

surprised and afflicted to hear them ; but how to understand them they knew not, because taken literally they appeared inconsistent with the faith they had professed, "that Jesus was the Christ." As little did they apprehend what "rising again" meant ; and how should they understand it ? Since they could not conceive how he could die, they could have no notion how or in what manner he could rise. Possibly they thought there was something mysterious in it. It was usual with their Master to discourse them, as well as the multitude, in parables, and to use common expressions in a sense that was hidden and mysterious. They had been long accustomed to this sort of language, and had frequently been puzzled with it. When he bade them to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," Matt. xvi. 6, they had little doubt about the meaning of so common a phrase, but the matter they quite mistook. And when he was in the temple disputing with the Jewish doctors, he said he was "about his Father's business," Luke ii. 49 ; the literal sense of the words was obvious enough, but the meaning was not understood. He told his disciples at another time, that "he had meat to eat, which they knew not of," John iv. 32 ; not meaning, as they were ready to understand it, common food, but something of quite another nature.

Thus, when our Lord talked to his disciples of suffering and dying, though such language at the first must needs alarm and afflict them, yet it was according to their notions impossible to be true in the literal sense. What then was more natural than to conclude that their Master had some hidden meaning ? We have a plain instance of this in a like case. The Jews looked on a man as defiled, that had eaten with unwashed hands ; but our Saviour tells the

scribes and Pharisees, "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out." Matt. xv. 11. What words could be plainer? But the thing being so opposite to Jewish maxims and practice, the disciples no more understood how it could be, than how the Messiah could suffer and die; and therefore Peter desires his Master to "declare unto them the parable." Matt. xv. 15. These prepossessions continued until after the resurrection. When their Lord was crucified, all their hopes died with him; and when he was risen again, it was some time before they could credit their own eyes, and be persuaded that they really beheld him. Strange as this may appear to the Considerer, I can see nothing unnatural in it.

Suppose now this account of the disciples' want of understanding to be true, it shows indeed their honesty and sincerity in reporting it fairly. But suppose (as the Considerer supposes) that it is all forged, I would fain know what policy there was in that contrivance. He says he suspects some fraudulent design in it; but what purpose was or could be served by this fraud? Did the apostles get anything, either honour or profit, by relating their own prejudices and hardness of belief?

But what is to be said for the chief priests? How came they to be apprehensive of a resurrection? They no more believed that Christ, the king of the Jews, could die and rise again, than the disciples did. Very true; but that prejudice stood not in their way, for they did not admit Jesus to be Christ. If they had, they would not have attempted to kill him. Why then did they fear his resurrection? The plain and clear answer is, because he had foretold it; for it was one thing to believe him to be a

great prophet, and another to believe him to be the Christ. That this was a well known distinction amongst the Jews appears from the discourse of the two disciples going to Emmaus, who, though they had given over all hopes that Jesus was the Christ, were still firm in the persuasion that he was "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Luke xxiv. 19. Now the Jews had been witnesses to so many wonders and miracles wrought by him, that whether they thought him to be the Christ or no, they could not but suspect that he was a great prophet at least, and might possibly come from the grave armed with power to take vengeance of their wicked and cruel treatment of him. This was but a natural apprehension; and their fears and guilty consciences added weight to every suspicion of this kind; and they were exactly in Herod's case, who, when he heard the fame of the great miracles which Jesus performed, said, "This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead; therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." Matt. xiv. 2. What is there in this that is not natural and probable?

Let us hear what the Considerer says to it: "If we take the opinion of the chief priests and Pharisees from their own words, as delivered by Matthew, they believe Jesus was a deceiver, and appear afraid, not of his rising in the day, but of the disciples stealing him away in the night." All that the Considerer says here depends on his supposing that the chief priests and Pharisees spoke their real sentiments to Pilate without any disguise; for otherwise, if they used any art, or formed a story merely as a pretence to obtain a guard to watch the sepulchre, nothing can be concluded from what they tell Pilate but this only,

that they wanted a guard to secure the sepulchre. Put the case that they were convinced of his miracles, apprized of the prophecy of his resurrection, and under a real apprehension that it might be fulfilled, and that to satisfy their doubts they wanted to set a guard; I would fain know what sort of a speech to Pilate the Considerer would make for them. Would he have them say, "Sir, this person whom you crucified at our instigation was indeed a mighty prophet, and the hand of God was with him in performing many wonderful works: he said, too, in his lifetime that he would rise from the dead after three days, and we are very apprehensive that he will rise indeed. Let therefore the sepulchre be guarded?" If these had been indeed their real sentiments, would they have told them to Pilate, after they had extorted from him the condemnation of Jesus, by representing him as a malefactor worthy of death, and as an enemy to the Roman government? Nobody can think it. They were under a necessity, whatever their private thoughts were, of carrying on the show before Pilate of treating Jesus as a deceiver, and pretending another reason than the true one for desiring a guard, namely, for fear his disciples should steal away the body. To argue, therefore, that the chief priests really believed all that they pretended to Pilate, is childish and ridiculous.

I have laid together the several predictions of our Lord's resurrection, and the circumstances that attended them, in order to show what little reason the Considerer had to suppose the chief priests entire strangers to them, on which one mistake all his reasoning against guarding and sealing the sepulchre depends. The Considerer asserts that the chief priests had no prophecy of the resurrection

but what could be deduced from the sign of Jonas ; and that, he says, could not be understood by them. Let us admit it, and see what the consequence will be. Is a prophecy no prophecy unless it can be understood by every body at the time it is given ? If the Considerer can persuade the world of this, he will do more towards destroying the credit of prophecy than all his predecessors have done from Celsus to this time. We often find Jesus speaking to the Jews in parables, and explaining them clearly to his disciples. The case here was much the same with respect to the prophecies of the resurrection. Those to his disciples were clear ; those to the scribes enigmatical, yet delivered in terms so corresponding to the event, that, when the event happened, the Jews could not doubt whether the prophecy related to it. The same may be said of that other prophecy, " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John ii. 19. The disciples understood not this, till after Jesus was risen ; but when the event had explained the terms, the prophecy was clear, and had the effect that all prophecy is meant to have, that " when the thing comes to pass we may believe."

But the Considerer thinks the prophecy from the case of Jonas not only dark and unintelligible at first, but, when understood and applied to the resurrection, false in fact in two respects : I suppose he means it did not correspond to the fact foretold in two respects. Let us hear the charge.

First, " The Son of man was to lie three days and three nights in the earth ; whereas Jesus lay but the time of one day and a half, that is, two nights and a day." Secondly, " The sign promised to be given was not given to

those it was promised to ;” that is, to that evil and adulterous generation.

It is somewhat strange that this great writer should be content to tread the dull road of vulgar infidels and sceptics ; repeating difficulties and objections that have been a thousand times proposed, and as often confuted ; but it is still more strange that they should be such as are fully considered and most clearly explained in the very book he professes to answer. How comes he to pass over all that is said in the Trial on this point ? Why such an affected silence here ? It would by no means have answered the Considerer’s purpose, to take notice how that author has explained Christ’s lying three days in the sepulchre ; but I can promise the reader it will abundantly answer his trouble to consult him on this subject ; and if he has any doubts or scruples on the point, he may there receive satisfaction. It may be unnecessary to add anything to what has been already said ; but that the Considerer may not think himself entirely neglected, I shall give a short answer to his objection, referring for the rest to the Trial itself.

It is well known that the Jews reckoned their time inclusive ; in their computation of days the first day and the last were included in the number. From one Sabbath to another they reckoned eight days, and this when the computation began at the close of the first, and ended at the very beginning of the second. And yet, in this case, there cannot be more than six solar days and seven nights, and consequently, there is the very same deficiency of two days and a night, which the Considerer charges on the account given of Christ’s resurrection. Three nights and three days, or three *νοχθήμερα*, were, in common language, the

same as three days ; they were equivalent expressions, and used the one for the other.\*

Luke says, ii. 21, the child Jesus was not circumcised until eight days were accomplished ; as strong an expression one would think as eight days and eight nights ; and yet the birth might, according to the known way of reckoning in this case, be at the close of the first, and the circumcision at the beginning of the last. Again, the words "after three days" are very full and expressive, and how are we to understand them ? The chief priests will inform us : "Sir," say they to Pilate, "we remember that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again ;" and yet their demand is, that the sepulchre be guarded only "till the third day." He has here the authority of his own friends, the chief priests and Pharisees, that "after three days," and "till the third day," are equivalent expressions, and were so used and understood in the common language of the country. We have, then, the concurrent evidence of the chief priests and the disciples, and that too on a point which neither of them could mistake, unless you can suppose them not to understand the language of their own people. How the expressions, "three days and three nights," "after three days," "on the third day," † are to be understood,

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\* So forty days and forty nights, an expression often repeated in the Old Testament and the New, was the same as forty days ; the first day and the last being each reckoned as a complete *νυχθήμερον*, or night and day, though only a portion of it.

† The Jews, it is plain, were not accurate to the letter in their reckoning of time. I shall give the reader one instance amongst many to be found in the Scriptures. It is 2 Kings xviii. 9, 10 : "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, (which was the seventh year of Hosea, son of Elah, king of Israel,) that Salmaneser,

Christ himself had expressly shown long enough before his death and resurrection : " I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected," Luke xiii. 35 ; exactly conformable to the case of a person taken ill one day, being bled the second, and dying the third, as stated in the Trial.

Neither Jews nor heathens of old ever objected that

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king of Assyria, came up against Samaria and besieged it; and at the end of three years took it." What can be stronger or more precise than this appears to be? Would the reader imagine it could mean anything less than three years complete? And yet it is certainly not so to be understood; for after the words "at the end of three years" it follows immediately, "even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, (that is, in the ninth year of Hosea,) Samaria was taken." Now it is evident to sight, that if "at the end of three years" was intended to signify three years complete, Hezekiah must have been in his seventh, and Hosea in his tenth year, when Samaria was taken. After all, our Saviour himself is the best interpreter of his own language. In the many predictions of his resurrection the most usual expression is "the third day;" sometimes it is "after three days," and once "three days and three nights," in which case the expression seems to be varied for no other reason than to accommodate it to the language and story of Jonas. Can it now be supposed that, speaking of the same event, he does not mean the same note of time, though the expression is a little varied? If then, one of the expressions happens to be clear, the natural and rational way is to explain the rest by it. Now this expression, "the third day," has nothing of obscurity in it, and consequently will help us to understand the rest. I would fain know what view our Saviour could possibly have in applying these several expressions to the same event, as implying the same note of time, or what interest the apostles could have in publishing it to the world, had they not been the common language of the country, well known and well understood by every one, as meaning one and the same thing. Such a conduct would only have exposed both master and disciples to scorn and contempt.—See Bishop Pearson's Exposition of the Creed, and Bishop Kidder's Demonstration of the Messias on this article.

the resurrection fell out too soon for the prediction, or that the language of Scripture on this point was not consistent. They knew very well it was the current language of the country, and the usual method of computation. The honour of starting such objections is reserved for the wise men of this age; who, knowing little of ancient usages and customs, are perpetually, from their own mistakes, raising objections against the gospel, and such as the ancient and more learned infidels would have been ashamed of.

But the Considerer has another difficulty yet behind, with regard to this history of Jonas. "The prediction," he says, "was not fulfilled, because the sign promised to be given was not given to those it was promised to;" that is, to the evil and adulterous generation.

Where does the Considerer find the promise he talks of? I can see no such promise in the words referred to. Christ tells them no sign should be given but that of the prophet Jonas. What does he engage for here? That he would appear to them in person after the resurrection? There is not a word about it. The promise, if you will have it a promise, was only that he would lie three days in the sepulchre. If this was not a sign to the Jews, nothing could be a sign to them, for they had the evidence of their own eyes and of their own guards.

But this part of the gospel history, the Considerer will not admit; and he thinks himself able to prove the whole a forgery. Let him speak his own sense of this matter: "that the priests and Pharisees set no watch, and that even the disciples themselves were not forewarned of their Master's rising again, will more fully appear by the facts which the evangelists themselves relate."

Let us now attend to the reasons that are to support

this bold undertaking. He first gives John's account of the care taken of the body by Nicodemus; who, together with Joseph, "took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, and laid it in the sepulchre."

On these facts the Considerer argues thus. He supposes, and very justly, that when the chief priests, placed a guard on the sepulchre, they took care to see that the body was there; and then says, "if they saw the body, they must needs see how it was spiced, or preserved for keeping, if it was done; they could not see one without the other." It is to little purpose to dispute these circumstances; it is sufficient to show that his observation is not supported by the text he pretends to build on. John says, the body with the spices "was wound up in linen clothes;" and without doubt the spices lay next the body, and were covered by the linen cloth; and the corpse bound in linen might be seen without seeing the spices. Suppose, however, that they saw the spices, and how the body was preserved for keeping; why then, he says, "would they not, then, being witnesses of that, have taken the soldiers back, resting contented that his disciples knew nothing of any prophecy of his rising again; and therefore could have no design under that pretence to steal away the body, and report he was risen?"

It is hard to make out the sense of this reasoning; but if it has any, it stands on these very absurd suppositions: 1. That had the disciples expected a resurrection, they would not have buried the body according to the custom of the country, with spices, but would have saved that expense as being unnecessary. 2. That this was a sufficient ground for the chief priests to conclude that the disciples expected no resurrection. 3. That they were governed

in this affair merely by what they knew or believed of the sentiments of the disciples. As to the first of these suppositions, the spicing or not spicing the body could have no influence on the resurrection; and therefore the disciples could not be determined to add or omit spices by their believing or not believing the resurrection. Had they expected fully that Jesus would rise, would that have prevented their showing the common respect to their Master, which all the country did to their dead friends? Or could the charge of spices enter into the consideration of this matter? 2. If there is no show of probability in supposing the disciples to be influenced in adding or omitting spices by their expectation of a resurrection, there could be no ground to conclude from their spicing the body that they did not expect a resurrection. 3. There is not the least intimation in the gospel that the chief priests knew the opinion of the disciples in this case, or that they would have considered it as of any weight or moment at all. They had heard of our Lord's prophecy, that he would rise again, and it filled them with great anxiety; for to his great power and wonderful works they had been witnesses. As to the disciples, they had them in contempt; and though, in order to frame a plausible pretence to Pilate for having a watch for the sepulchre, they tell him of their apprehensions that the disciples might steal the body, yet there is no probability that this pretence was the true and only ground for their fear. You see now how his first demonstration against the gospel history comes out. His second is from the behaviour of Mary Magdalene and the other women. He says, "they knew to be sure that Nicodemus had laid the body in spices;" and yet Luke and Mark say they brought spices

early in the morning, when the Sabbath was past, to anoint the body. And if this was the case, says he, "what need had it of more?" and so infers that John's account of spices used by Nicodemus, and Mark's and Luke's of the women bringing spices afterwards, cannot be reconciled.

As the Considerer pretends here to argue from facts related by the evangelists, I would ask him whence he had the fact on which all this reasoning depends. The evangelists give him no such information; nay, their account is inconsistent with it; for the women were not present when Joseph and Nicodemus bound up the body with spices, nor does it appear that they saw the body after it was bound up; if they did, they could not see the spices which were hid by the linen winding-sheet. Matthew says, the women "sat over against the sepulchre;" Mark, that they "beheld where the body was laid." Had they been concerned in preparing the body for burial, would the evangelists have separated their case from that of Joseph and Nicodemus so remarkably? Would they have ascribed the whole care of the body and the funeral to the men only, and said no more of the women than that they saw where the body was laid? These accounts plainly suppose that the women were without, watching, while the body was preparing, and that when it was carried out to be buried, they went after to observe the place where it was laid. Luke's account is more expressly so. His words are, "The women followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how the body was laid." It is not, as at verse 49 of the same chapter, *συνακολουθήσασαι*, they went in company with Joseph; but *κατακολουθήσασαι*, they followed after him. The evangelists adds, *ἔθεάσαντο*

τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ ὡς ἐτέθη τὸ σῶμα· ὡς does not signify, as the Considerer understands it, *quo modo*, but *quòd*; and the passage is not to be rendered *quo modo positum est*, but *quòd positum* or *sepultum\* est corpus*; that is, they came to the sepulchre, and saw that the body was buried.

But allowing for once that the women knew what had already been done to the body, what then? They could not but know that all was done in great haste, in a tumultuary manner. And will the Considerer pretend to say, that as much had been done by Joseph and Nicodemus as was usual or necessary to be done, and that the whole ceremony was already completed? This is more than appears from the evangelists, and much more than in the nature of the thing is possible to be true.

No nation was more careful of their dead than the Jews. The body was first to be washed all over, and cleaned with much care, and afterwards to be anointed. But in regard to Christ's body, there was not time before the Sabbath to perform even thus much of the ceremony. When it was taken down from the cross, the evening was coming on; and it was not yet dark when it was left in the sepulchre.†

The funeral ceremony, it is plain, was not nor could already be completed. Offices of this solemn kind, especially for persons of character and distinction, were not used to be performed the moment they were dead, nor to be huddled up in so hasty and negligent a manner. Moses informs us that when Jacob was embalmed, no less than forty days were employed in the operation, Gen. 1. 3.

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\* Instances in the New Testament are frequent, where *τίθημι* is used in this sense.

† Compare Matt. xxvii. 57, with Luke xxiii. 54.

And Herodotus (whose authority perhaps the philosopher may like better) tells us, that amongst the Egyptians, from whom the Jews borrowed that practice, no less than seventy days were required to complete it. Herod. lib. ii.

Joseph and Nicodemus intended, no doubt, to inter the body of Christ in a manner agreeable to the notion they had of his dignity and character. No less than a hundred pound weight of spices and perfumes were procured for this purpose; not wholly to be employed in preparing the body, as the Considerer seems to imagine, but to be burnt both before and after it was laid in the sepulchre, and to be spent in a manner well known to those who are at all acquainted with antiquity. The sepulchre in which the body was laid, was probably not that in which it was to be finally deposited. It was wrapped up with some of the spices, and laid there for present convenience only, because it happened to be near the place of crucifixion; John xix. 41, and because the Sabbath was so near, that it was impossible to carry it further. The funeral ceremonies were reserved to be performed after the Sabbath, had not Providence prevented it by a more wonderful event.

Whether the women were acquainted with the little that had already been done to the body is indeed nothing to the purpose. They knew where it had been deposited, and they knew probably that it was afterwards to be removed. They came therefore early in the morning to pay their last respects to it by anointing and perfuming it; a common method of showing respect to persons of dignity and distinction both living and dead. John xii. 3.

What possible foundation then is there for the Considerer's absurd suggestions, "that there is no dependence on gospel history; that the evangelists contradict one

another in this point ; that the women had seen the body laid in spices, and that there was no occasion for more ?” Instead of convicting the evangelists of contradicting one another, he has only betrayed his own extreme ignorance in Scripture and antiquity ; and that too in a case so common and obvious, that a man must take some pains to mistake it.

His next demonstration against Matthew’s account of guarding the sepulchre, is from these words of the women, “ Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ?” Mark xvi. 3, “ which,” he observes, “ they would not have said if they had known it was sealed, and a guard placed.” And he thinks if there was indeed a watch, it is impossible the women should be ignorant of it. I have considered the account given by the evangelists, and cannot see the least foundation for these imaginations. The body was laid in the sepulchre in the evening of Friday ; the women went from thence and prepared spices, and on the Sabbath (or Saturday) they rested without stirring from home. Luke xxiii. 56. On the Sabbath, while the women were confined at home, the guards were placed. Early the next morning the women go directly from home to the sepulchre, expecting to find it as they left it, with a stone at the mouth too large and heavy for them to move ; and therefore they say, “ Who shall roll away the stone ?” The Considerer says, “ If these things (that is, placing a guard, &c.) had been done, how is it possible but they must have known them ?” I cannot apprehend how it was possible they should know them. I suppose he does not imagine that either the Roman governor or the chief priests thought it necessary to inform these poor women what they were doing. But he thinks so public an action must needs

come to their knowledge. Who should carry it to them? It was the Sabbath day, when others, as well as they, staid at home; for which reason it is very probable that this action was not publicly known on that day.

The Considerer goes on: "Besides, nothing could be hid from the disciples; Matthew knew what the chief priests and rulers said in their privy council." How does this appear? Why, Matthew, ten or more years afterwards, when the secret was divulged, relates what the chief priests did in council; and from thence he infers that Matthew knew everything done in council at the time of doing it. I am quite ashamed to spend my own and my reader's time thus impertinently.

"But why do these evangelists tell different stories?" What does the Considerer mean? Matthew alone tells the story of guarding the sepulchre. The rest are quite silent on that point, but say nothing that is inconsistent with it. How then do they differ? Is it not the most usual thing in the world for historians, in reporting the same fact, to relate some of them more, and some fewer circumstances, that attended it? and did ever any man of common sense charge them with inconsistency on that account? Suppose that in telling the story of Edward II., one historian should conclude with saying that he resigned the crown; and another should be more particular, and give an account of a deputation sent to him in form to take his resignation: would the Considerer question the truth of the principal fact, that he resigned the crown? The case is the same here. The principal facts, the death, the burial, the resurrection of Christ, are attested by all the evangelists. Of the circumstances of the history some relate more, some fewer; does this invalidate their

testimony in reporting the principal facts, in which they entirely agree ?

The account given by Matthew, of guarding and sealing the sepulchre, is a very material circumstance, and was particularly so to the Jews, who had by this means, of their own contrivance, the most evident demonstration of the only sign intended them, the sign of the prophet Jonas. Our Lord told them that they should have this sign, and should know that the Son of man was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Had they been contented with seeing him crucified and buried, and concerned themselves no further, I know not how they would have had the evidence of his being three days in the earth. But by the secret working of Providence they themselves furnish out the evidence. They guard the sepulchre, and their own guards report that it was, by irresistible power from above, opened, and the prisoner released on the third day.

Matthew, by the concurrent testimony of all antiquity, wrote his gospel for the use of the Hebrews particularly ; and this story of guarding the sepulchre being an evidence of the completion of a prophecy given to that nation in particular, seems to be the reason why he relates it so punctually. Whoever will read Matthew's gospel, and compare it attentively with the other gospels, will see so many internal marks to confirm the report of antiquity that he wrote for the use of his countrymen, that he will have little reason to doubt it. And since one evangelist only has mentioned this circumstance of guarding the sepulchre, how providential was it that we have the account in that gospel which was written for the Jews particularly ! When this gospel was published, there were thousands

living in that country who knew and could inform others of the circumstances reported by Matthew ; and is it credible that Matthew would have published this account in Judea itself, where, if false, it must undoubtedly have been detected ? If this story had appeared first in a history published among the heathen at a great distance from Judea, the infidels would have triumphed, and told us that the historian took the advantage of telling the people a strange story, but took care to lay the scene of it at a place where it was not likely they should send to make inquiries. We should then have been asked, why the story was not told in the gospel intended for the use of the Jews particularly, who had proper means to examine the truth of it. Well then ; the story happily was published in Judea itself, and being found in Matthew's gospel, is an appeal to the whole nation of the Jews for the truth of the fact, and probably made whilst many were living who were concerned in the transaction.

That Matthew reports this story, and the other evangelists omit it, is not a singular case. Matthew's view in writing for the Jews shows itself in other like instances. The massacre of the infants by Herod is reported by Matthew only, and for the same reason ; because it was a fact of peculiar moment to the Jews, as it showed the sense of the nation in expecting the Messiah at the very time when Christ was born ; as it was the completion of a prophecy set forth in their own Scriptures ; and as it was a fact that happened at their own door, in which they could not be imposed on.

For a like reason, Matthew quotes many prophecies, and applies them to the Messiah in a way well known and understood by the Jews, but in a way unknown to

the Gentiles, and therefore they appear not in the other gospels.

So, again, the genealogies of Christ in Luke and Matthew appear at first sight to be very different, but are entirely reconcilable by considering for whose use the two gospels were intended—Matthew's for the Jews, Luke's for the Gentiles. There were two ways of reckoning descents among the Jews: one of them common to them and other nations, by the course of descent from father to son; the other was by the legal descent established in their law; according to which, if an elder brother died without issue, and left a widow, the next brother was to take her to wife; and their first-born son was in law the son of the eldest brother, and succeeded to his estate. It is manifest that these genealogies must meet in the common ancestor, for brothers' children have the same grandfather. Now Luke, writing to the Gentiles, deduces the genealogy of Christ in the way understood by them, *secundum jus sanguinis*. Matthew, writing to the Jews, follows the method by which the right of succession was governed among the Jews, and draws out the genealogy according to the legal descent. These instances and many others that might be given, show how little weight there is in objecting against a piece of history, because it appears but in one, or sometimes but in two of the four evangelists.

At page 28, &c., of the third edition, and 37, &c., of the first, the Considerer spends a great deal of paper and pains to confute some imaginations, in which nobody is concerned but himself. He takes it for granted that the Jews, to account for their guarding the sepulchre, must act on one or other of these persuasions; they must either

be fully satisfied that Christ would rise again, and then he says it was to no purpose to guard the sepulchre in order to prevent it; or they must be fully satisfied that he would not rise again, and then there was no reason, he says, to be apprehensive of a fraudulent resurrection. It is hardly possible that either of these should be their real case. They were anxious and solicitous about this event; alarmed and confounded with recollecting his miracles, and the prophecies of his rising from the dead; unable to satisfy their own doubts, or to calm the misgivings of their own minds. Sometimes they imagined that possibly he might rise; sometimes perhaps that the disciples might secrete the body, and tell the people strange stories. How to extricate themselves they knew not; and therefore they apply to Pilate for a guard, in hopes of finding some relief in their distress, as men in distress are ready to take anything for a remedy. But that they had as much leisure and as much cool infidelity as the Considerer had when he argued their cause for them, is utterly incredible; and were they to give an account for themselves, they would hardly plead their own cause as this wise advocate, without attending to the situation they were in, has done for them.

The conduct of the Jewish rulers, with regard to our Saviour, was the more likely to be wrong, because they judged and acted on wrong maxims. They were so possessed with the expectation of a Messiah with temporal power, that no reason could persuade them that Christ was the person, as he pretended to no such power; and on this notion they were so resolutely determined to oppose his pretensions, that no evidence could convince them that his claims were just. The people, however, were

not so insensible as their leaders; convinced by his wonders, and engaged by the many acts of benevolence he daily did, they followed him in great numbers. Their governors, concerned and enraged to see the people thus deluded, as they called it, by a pretender, determined to put an end to his pretensions by putting an end to his life. Accordingly they had him apprehended, accused of blasphemy against God, and treason against Cæsar, and publicly executed. But the danger was not yet over. He prophesied in his lifetime that he should rise again in three days, and we have shown before that they had now reason to be alarmed at this prophecy. The works done in his life, compared with the amazing scene that was opened at his death, must needs fill them with doubts and fears. They could not tell but some extraordinary power might possibly exert itself on behalf of one at whose agonies all nature seemed to sympathize; or if after all he should prove to be an impostor, they imagined, or pretended to imagine, that the disciples might take advantage of this situation of things, and contrive to carry on the cheat; that they might possibly remove the body out of sight, and give out that the prophecy was fulfilled. Thus the delusions of the people, though checked awhile by his death, might break out afresh and become more riveted and confirmed by a supposed resurrection; and so the last error be worse than the first. To quiet their own minds therefore, and to be fully satisfied about the event, a guard of soldiers is placed at the sepulchre. But on the third day they are frightened from their post by an angel and an earthquake, fly into the city, and make their report to the chief priests. The chief priests well knew what effect this report would naturally have on the minds of the people, if fairly made; to prevent which they re-

solve in the first place to publish a story of their own ; and therefore, with a rich bribe in hand, and a full assurance of indemnity, they prevail with the watch to be silent as to what they had seen at the sepulchre, and to give out that the disciples stole away the body whilst they were asleep.

But to justify the credit of this piece of history, we must, it seems, answer all the imaginations of the Considerer, who has given his judgment on the part acted by the guards and the chief priests, and is of opinion that neither of them could do what the history ascribes to them. He has summed up his reasoning thus : “ It is amazing that the guard at the sepulchre should be terrified almost to death with astonishing wonders, and the high priests and rulers believe them, yet these things should have no more effect on them than if they had not believed them.”

Little dealers in history and politics are never more contemptible than when they attempt to assign reasons for or against plain facts reported by writers of credit. The actions of a great general have been sometimes called in question, because a little smatterer in military affairs conceives the schemes not to have been well laid or not well conducted ; and then, full of his own wisdom, he says, Could any great general act so ? On the strength of which reasoning he concludes the history to be false. There are two small faults in this way of arguing : first, that he who reasons so, takes it for granted that he is able to judge wisely in the case himself, which often happens to be otherwise ; secondly, that men in all cases act wisely and reasonably, which seldom is the case.

But let us hear in the first place, what the Considerer has to say for the guards.

“It is strange, unaccountably strange, that those soldiers, who were just now almost struck dead with terror, should lose the impressions so easily and so soon, which it had made on them, which just before scarce left them power to fly from the deadly fright which an earthquake and an angel had put them in ! that for money they should all agree together to enlist themselves in the priests’ service to fight against God, when by so doing they might expect some heavy judgment to fall on them ; but by affirming the truth boldly, conceive reasonable hopes of being captains in the Messiah’s victorious army, which was to conquer all nations.”

Let us now consider the grounds on which he builds. He supposes these common soldiers, who were heathens, and bred up to despise the religion of the Jews above all others, to be persuaded that when they took a bribe of the chief priests, “they enlisted themselves to fight against God, and that they might expect some heavy judgment ;” and that by acting otherwise, “they might have reasonable hopes of being captains in the Messiah’s victorious army,” which was to conquer all nations. How comes the Considerer to furnish the soldiers with these sentiments ? Does he imagine that a fright would make them forget all the religion of their own country at once, and turn Jews, and firm believers in the God of the Jews ; and that it would give them the same opinion of the Messiah which the Jews had, and make them think Jesus to be the Messiah and fill them with expectation of employments under him ? Nothing surely can be more out of character. But, however, they were terrified ; and the Considerer thinks it strange they should lose the impression so easily and so soon. What impression does he

mean? If he means the sentiments which he has ascribed to them, I am persuaded they did not lose them, for they never had them. The Roman soldiers very probably knew nothing more than that they were appointed to watch the sepulchre that the body might not be removed; and that they were acquainted with the character and pretensions of the person lying in the grave, there is not the least reason to suspect; much less had they any expectation of being disturbed by invisible powers; and when they were disturbed, what probability is there in making them reason immediately like Jews, and think of God and his Messiah as if they had been his disciples? But suppose them (if you please) to have some tincture of religion; suppose too they believed with the centurion at the crucifixion that Christ was indeed a righteous man; and yet further, that he was particularly favoured of the gods; what is all this to the purpose? If he was a favourite of the gods, it was the gods of his own country, with whom they imagined they had nothing to do. They had gods of their own, to whom they were bound, and whom they served, if they served any gods at all. As to the Jewish religion, if they thought anything of it, they thought with the rest of the heathens that it was the worst of superstitions. It remains then only that the soldiers were scared and terrified by a surprising sight. And where is the wonder that when the fright was over, they should be what they were before, mere common soldiers, and ready to take money, which was to be earned at so cheap a rate, as reporting a story made for them by the chief priests? It was all one to them who moved the body; they were unaffected with the consequences that alarmed the chief priests; and I dare say ready money

outweighed all hopes the Considerer has given them, of getting commissions under the Jewish Messiah.

In the next place, he undertakes the cause of the chief priests, and to prove that the part assigned to them in the gospel history is a weak one and a wicked one; and thence he concludes they neither did nor could act that part, and that the account of it is forged. The first part of his task is indeed an easy one; for the chief priests acted very foolishly and very wickedly; but I am in some pain for his consequence. Will he maintain that no men act wickedly or weakly? or though many do, yet the chief priests never did or could? I doubt he will be at a full stop here. But let us hear him. "The priests," he says, "as well as the people, were credulous of miracles, being nursed up in the belief of them, which when attested by their own party, persons whose veracity they could depend on, (not the flying reports of a giddy mob,) must have prevented them from doing what it is here pretended they did."

But why should the chief priests be more affected by miracles attested by their own party, that is, the guards, than by those which they saw themselves? Many such there were; some of them I have already mentioned. But how were they affected by them? Did they not seek the life of Jesus for raising Lazarus, and the life of Lazarus that he might not live a witness of the power of Jesus? Did they not admit the miracles, and yet ascribe them to the power of Beelzebub? And might they not with the same reason ascribe all the guards reported to be done at the sepulchre, to the same power?

If it be sufficient to set aside the authority of the gospel, because it represents the chief priests acting unrea-

sonably, the same argument will be too hard for the credit of all the histories in being; for they all show us men acting with great folly and great wickedness. The Old Testament must doubtless follow the New; for what is more unreasonable than the behaviour of the ancient Jews after their wonderful deliverance from Egypt? May not the Considerer say, had God so visibly interposed for their deliverance, it is impossible they should rebel so soon as the history says they did; and therefore the history must be false? But I leave this, to consider a complaint of a much higher nature.

The angel, it seems, who was the minister of God, and acted as by him directed, did "very impolitically in frightening away the watch, before Jesus came out of the sepulchre, so that they could not be witnesses of his resurrection." How he knows that the watch was terrified before Jesus came out of the sepulchre, I cannot tell; he learns it not from the gospel. The angel moved this stone for the sake of those who came to the sepulchre, that they might see and report what they saw; our Lord certainly wanted not their help. But why were the angels impolitic? Were they to govern themselves by the politics of the chief priests, and follow their measures? Had God, or the angels by his direction, appointed the watch to be witnesses of the resurrection, and they had been scared away before the time, the objection would have lain; but how was God bound to give this evidence to the guards? Was it because the chief priests had set the watch? But what right had they to prescribe to God who should be eye-witnesses of his Son's resurrection? The setting of the watch and what followed was sufficient to convince the Jews that Jesus, according to his own

prophecy, was three days in the heart of the earth, and then released. This evidence rose providentially out of their own contrivance to watch the body; but their contrivance laid no obligation on God, nor could it hasten or retard the resurrection, or have any effect on the manner of it. We find in the gospel, that very particular care was taken by our Lord to appoint chosen witnesses of the resurrection. To them he showed himself alive after the resurrection; to them were given powers from on high to confirm this evidence; but where does the Considerer read that it was referred to the high priests, or that they had any right to appoint witnesses in this case? If they had no right to appoint them, no injury was done in not admitting them. And yet after all, though the Considerer thinks the guards did not see enough, they saw so much as to make their report of great weight, had there not been an incorrigible obstinacy in the Jewish rulers; enough to awaken their attention, and to call to their remembrance the sign of Jonas, which was to be given them; enough to raise serious reflections on all the miracles of Jesus, of which they had themselves been eye-witnesses.

We come now to consider the inconsistencies which the Considerer charges on the evangelists, in the account they give of the circumstances of the resurrection. One would imagine this gentleman had never read any piece of history reported by different writers, or any trial whose facts are proved by many witnesses; otherwise he would not have objected to the relations of the evangelists, merely because some mentioned circumstances omitted by others, though all agree in the principal facts to be proved; and all the circumstances, though all not mentioned by

each writer, are perfectly consistent. For this is the case of all historians, who treat of the same facts ; and I am persuaded that, had the gospel accounts with all their varieties related to any matter of civil history, and been published under the name of any Grecian or Roman historians, these different relations, instead of being thought matter of objection, would have been considered as confirming and establishing each the other. Such differences among reporters of the same fact, will always be found from the very nature of things ; for all facts being attended with many circumstances, and all of them not of equal importance, historians, according to their different judgments, choose to report some more, some fewer of those circumstances. This, I say, must be the common case, where historians write without regard to each other ; but it must necessarily be so where a later historian publishes an account on purpose to supply the defects or omissions of those before him ; for then his very design is to add such things or circumstances as the others had either totally neglected or imperfectly related.

The four gospels were not published at the same time, nor can the precise date of the publication of each of them be ascertained. Matthew, by the general consent of antiquity, is taken to be first, and to have been published not many years after our Saviour's crucifixion. Mark and Luke came next in order. After all, and long after all, came John's gospel, published in an extreme old age, and not above a year before his death. His intention was, as all antiquity bears witness, to complete the history of our Saviour, by adding what the other evangelists had omitted, and enlarging what they had concisely related.

This being the state of the history, as contained in the

four gospels, the true way of examining it is, to consider the accounts given by the first three evangelists separately, (as being the accounts which lay before John when he wrote his gospel,) and then to compare them with John, by which means we shall see what he left as he found it, and as wanting no addition or explanation, and also what additions or explanations he thought proper to insert : and so be able to judge on the whole, whether the history be consistent with itself.

In order to give the reader the light which I think will arise from this method I will lay before him the accounts of the three evangelists, of what passed at the sepulchre, and then consider what the difference between them is ; and lastly, compare them with John's account, and consider how the difference will then stand on the foot of the additions or explications given by him.

#### MATTHEW, CHAP. xxviii.

1. In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre.

2. And behold there was a great earthquake ; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

3. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.

4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye : for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.

6. He is not here ; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead ; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him : lo, I have told you.

8. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word.

9. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

### MARK, CHAP. xvi.

1. And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre: for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.

9. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

10. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

### LUKE, CHAP. xxiv.

1. Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

2. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.
3. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.
4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments :
5. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead ?
6. He is not here, but is risen : remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,
7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.
8. And they remembered his words,
9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.
10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.
11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.
12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

You see Matthew is the only one who mentions the earthquake, and the angels descending to roll away the stone. As the rest say nothing of it, it is very absurd to say, as the Considerer does, that they contradict it. I shall only therefore observe on this part, that our English translation is not exact ; for after relating the coming of the women to the sepulchre, it follows, “and behold there was a great earthquake,” &c., which may lead the reader to imagine that the earthquake happened whilst the women were at the sepulchre ; which it did not. Matthew was to account for the women’s finding the stone rolled away, and therefore inserts what happened just before their coming and his words should be rendered, “and behold there had been an earthquake.”

If you compare these three evangelists together in other

respects, the difference between them will lie in these particulars.

1. Mark and Luke say, the women came early to the sepulchre, bringing spices to anoint the body; Matthew says they came early to the sepulchre, but says nothing of their bringing spices.

2. Matthew says, the two Marys came to the sepulchre; Mark, the two Marys and Salome; Luke says, the women who came from Galilee with him, and he tells us, (verse 11) that they were the two Marys, Joanna, and other women with them.

3. The three evangelists agree that the women saw a vision; Matthew says, an angel; Mark, a young man; Luke, two men, whom (verse 23) he calls two angels.

4. Matthew and Mark agree in the message sent by the angels to the disciples, that he would go before them into Galilee. Luke does not mention this message expressly, but that the angels remind the women of what Jesus had said, being with them in Galilee, of his death and resurrection.

These differences cannot be accounted for by anything added in the gospel of John; and therefore I shall postpone the consideration of them for the sake of pursuing the view before me.

The next and most material difference occurs in the account given of our Lord's appearing to Mary Magdalene. Matthew says that as the women went from the sepulchre to carry the message to the disciples, Jesus met them, and gave them another message to the disciples. Mark, after concluding the account of what passed at the sepulchre, says, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene."

He does not mention this as part of what appeared at the sepulchre, but as a new and distinct account of itself. Luke gives no account of our Lord's appearing to Mary.

These accounts considered together, the case will stand thus : stop at Matthew's account of what passed at the sepulchre, to the women's going with the angel's message to the disciples, which ends with ver. 8, and take Mark's account, without tacking to it the separate relation of the appearance to Mary Magdalene, (which is indeed no part of the account as given by Mark of what happened at the sepulchre,) and then the three accounts are (excepting the small variations before mentioned, and hereafter to be accounted for) perfectly consistent.

The difficulty then remaining is to account for Luke's saying nothing of this appearance ; for Mark's speaking of it as distinct from what happened at the sepulchre ; for Matthew's placing it before he had accounted for the delivery of the first message, and adding a second message of like import from Christ himself.

The difficulty with respect to Luke is not great ; he has omitted the appearance, for it came not within the compass of what he proposed to relate, as will appear presently. Neither are Matthew and Mark, who relate this appearance, at variance. They agree in the appearance, agree that it was early on the first day of the week ; Matthew says, it was "as they went to tell the disciples ;" and so it might be consistently with Mark, for he has said nothing to the contrary. Thus the case would stand, had we only the history as given by these three evangelists.

When John wrote his gospel, he had reason to enlarge the account given of what passed at the sepulchre, for the

sake of adding his own testimony, who had been himself an eye-witness; which testimony the other evangelists had omitted. Compare John and Luke together, and John plainly carries on the account where Luke left it. Luke relates how the women went to the sepulchre, saw angels, received a message to the disciples; that they delivered the message, and that Peter on hearing it went away to the sepulchre, and found everything to answer the relation. Now John went and was a witness of these things as well as Peter: he leaves therefore Luke's account (which was exact as to what happened before Peter went) as he found it; and carries it on by beginning with a clear and distinct account of his own going with Peter to the sepulchre. To introduce this account he says: "the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and the other disciple whom Jesus loved," &c. John xx. 1, 2. He then gives an account of what he and Peter observed of the state of the sepulchre. It appears at ver. 11, that Mary returned to the sepulchre, and staid there after him; that she saw again a vision of angels, and saw Jesus himself, who gave her a message to deliver to the disciples.

Let us now see how their accounts will correspond together.

1. It is manifest that Mary went twice to the sepulchre.
2. That John gives no other account of what passed at her first being there, except that she found the stone taken away from the sepulchre, and this only as introductory to what he had to add further.
3. That the story of her first going, and what related

to it, ended at the relation she made of what she had seen to Peter and John.

4. That the appearance of Jesus to her, and the message given to her, were at her second being at the sepulchre.

It comes out from these lights given by John :

First, that Luke's account related only to what happened at Mary's first going to the sepulchre; for it ends at Peter's setting out to view the sepulchre, where John begins.

Secondly, since Luke's account agrees with Matthew's and Mark's in relating what passed at the sepulchre, it follows that their accounts are relations of what passed only at Mary's first coming, that is, Matthew's account to ver. 8, inclusive, and Mark's to ver. 8, inclusive.

Thirdly, John having informed us that Christ appeared to Mary, and delivered his message to her at her second coming to the sepulchre, it follows that what Matthew says, ver. 9, 10, and Mark, ver. 9—11, happened at her second coming to the sepulchre.

Thus John's additional account has given us a clear order of the whole transaction. And it appears that Luke considered the women merely as messengers of the news to the disciples; and as soon as the message was delivered, and the disciples made acquainted with it, he prosecutes their story no further. Mark, in like manner, but adds the appearance to Mary as a distinct and separate thing by itself.

Matthew has given an account of what happened at the first going to the sepulchre, and has also mentioned the appearance to Mary, which he has connected to the former account as part (and so indeed it was) of the same transaction. Had he mentioned this appearance, as Mark has

mentioned it, without making any connection between the appearance and the story of the first visit to the sepulchre, there had been no difficulty in this part of the case.

The difficulty there now is, arises from the manner in which Matthew connects these two parts together. He says that Jesus appeared to the women "as they went to tell the disciples:" John's account is, that he appeared to Mary after she had delivered the message, (not to the disciples, but) to himself and Peter, and had returned a second time to the sepulchre.

I believe that there are very few histories in the world where difficulties of this sort, were they nicely inquired into, do not frequently occur. Writers of history, to make one thread of story, lay hold of any circumstances to make a transition from one fact to another. A little agreement of the facts in place or time often serves; and we read in or near the same place, or about the same time, such and such things happened, in which exactness is not intended or expected. And had we nothing else to say on the present difficulty, it would be sufficient with reasonable men.

But as this seeming disagreement has been so strongly insisted on, I desire the reader to consider the following observations.

1. Matthew's account may very well consist with John's. Matthew does not say the women had delivered no message to the disciples, nor does John say they had delivered it to any but himself and Peter. Consider then: the women who received the message from the angel at their first going to the sepulchre could not deliver it to the disciples all at once; for it is not to be supposed that they

were all together so early in the morning; for which reason the women probably divided themselves, and some went to some of the disciples, and some went to others; and Mary Magdalene, and whoever else attended her, went in the first place to Peter and John to inform them, intending to go to others with like notice. But when they found that Peter and John went directly to the sepulchre, they did, as it was extremely natural for them to do, go after them to see the sepulchre, which they had left in fear, but very desirous to view it again in company of the men, intending soon to return and deliver the message to the other disciples. On this case it is evident they returned to the sepulchre before they had delivered their message as they were required to do, to the disciples; and Matthew might very well consider the appearance of Jesus as happening whilst they were employed in carrying the first message. And this accounts likewise for our Saviour's giving them a second message, much to the same purpose and import as the first.

2. There is no reason to think that Matthew's words are to be taken so strictly as to limit the appearance of Jesus to the women to the very moment in which they passed from the sepulchre with the first message to the disciples.

1. Because there could not, from the first going to the sepulchre to the end of the whole account, including the appearance to Mary, be more than an hour at most employed; and facts crowded so close together are scarcely ever reported under different dates.

2. Because Matthew, throwing the whole transaction into one continued story, would naturally consider no more than the general order in which things happened, without

distinguishing the short time which the whole took up into different periods.

3. Because the language used by Matthew does really import no more than the general order in which things happened: he says, *ὡς ἐπορεύοντο ἀπαγγεῖλαι*, "as they were going to tell." You have at verse 11 the very same way of speaking, *πορευομένων δὲ αὐτῶν*. It is the very same note of time; for he speaks of the women's going with the message, and says, "Now when they (the women) were going, behold the watch came into the city, and showed the chief priests all the things that were done." Can any one suppose that the evangelist means more than that the watch went to the city about the same time that the women went to the disciples? Or if it could possibly appear that the watch were really a quarter of an hour sooner or later than the women, would this, in the opinion of any man living, impeach the credit of the historian? If any person desires more instances of these transitions, they occur frequently in Matthew and in other writers of the New Testament.

As to the order in which we have placed the transactions at the sepulchre, by comparison of the four evangelists together, it is confirmed and established beyond all doubt by the account which the two disciples going to Emmaus give our Saviour. This, say they, is the third day since the crucifixion; "yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not," Luke xxiv. 21, &c.

Compare this with Luke's own account, and John's as far as it relates to what himself and Peter did at the sepulchre, and you will find the facts reported in the same order. These two disciples left Jerusalem as soon as Peter and John had made their report, and before Mary Magdalene had reported the appearance of Christ to her, or had delivered his message to the disciples ; which proves that the account as it stands in Matthew, including the appearance to Mary Magdalene, was not told to the disciples at once, but must be accounted for in the manner above mentioned ; otherwise these two disciples must have known of the appearance of Christ, as well as of the other circumstances prior to it, which they so punctually relate.

You see here plainly that the two disciples, speaking of the first visit the women made to the sepulchre, say, "they found not his body ;" and thence the Considerer infers they never saw him ; expressly contrary to the account given by John of their second visit to the sepulchre. And for want of observing the series of the story, he goes on mistaking and confounding the circumstances which belong to the first and the second visit to the sepulchre, and triumphs in discovering contradictions in the evangelists ; whereas, in truth, the only thing he has discovered is, that he does not understand them.

In stating thus the series and order of what passed at the sepulchre, there is one difficulty only to be accounted for ; namely, John speaks of the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene only ; Matthew speaks of it as made to more than one ; and Mark says that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, which may be thought not to agree with Matthew's account.

Now though John speaks only of Mary Magdalene, she

being the principal person, and it being not at all necessary to his purpose to mention more, (for a message delivered by her accounts as well for his going to the sepulchre as if it had been delivered by twenty;) yet if you consider what Mary Magdalene says herself, it will appear that she was not alone. Her words are, “they have taken the Lord out of the sepulchre, and *we* know not where they have laid him.” *We* imports that she had others with her at delivering this message; and if she had, it cannot be supposed that they left her to go alone to the sepulchre when she followed Peter and John, or permitted her to stay behind them alone at the sepulchre. Consequently the appearance was to Mary Magdalene when others were with her, though she only is mentioned by John throughout his account.

As to Mark, he says, “Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” His meaning is, that the first appearance he made was to her; but that it was to her only he does not say. And it is manifest that the word *first* (*πρωτον*) relates to the order of appearances; for it follows, (ver. 12,) *after that* he appeared in another form to two of them, and, (ver. 14,) *afterward* he appeared unto the eleven. The first appearance then was certainly to Mary Magdalene; but whether to her alone depends on a careful comparison of the evangelists together. And on the whole, I think the account here given seems to me to be the most probable; which I would be understood to say, without prejudice to other interpretations which many worthy and learned writers have followed.

But let us now look back to the variations between the first three evangelists, which we passed over before.

1. The first is, that Mark and Luke say, “the women

came early to the sepulchre bringing spices ;” Matthew says nothing of their bringing spices.

It gives light to any piece of history to show the motives of the principal actions recorded ; but where the fact itself is the only material thing, such circumstances may or may not be added, as the historian pleases. In the present case, the fact itself, that the women were early at the sepulchre, saw the stone rolled away, and the body not there, are the only material things in the narration. And whether they came early to the sepulchre for one reason or for another, is of little consequence ; and it is in the discretion of the writer to add or omit the reason as he pleases, without prejudice to the history, which depends on the truth of the fact only. Matthew has said nothing to intimate that they did not bring spices, nor has he assigned any other reason for their coming ; and the Considerer excepted, I believe no man can discern any contrariety in the accounts.

2. The second is, that Matthew says the two Marys came to the sepulchre ; Mark, the two Marys and Salome ; Luke, the women who came from Galilee, and he reckons (ver. 11) the two Marys, Joanna, and other women with them.

The three evangelists agree in naming the two Marys as the principal persons concerned ; some of them mention others as being in their company. And this is a variation which I believe happens in every part of a story reported by different writers, and is no discredit to any. Suppose that three news-writers should give an account of opening a meeting of parliament. The first should say, “ the king, attended by the prince, came to parliament ;” the second, “ the king, attended by the prince and the

duke ;” the third, “ the king, attended by the prince, the duke, and the principal officers of state ;” would any living man imagine he saw contradictions in these accounts ? Why then is the gospel suspected in a case where no history in the world would be suspected ?

3. The same answer may be applied to the third variation, so far as it relates to the number of angels seen. The mentioning one was sufficient to answer all the purposes of the history ; and he who says there were two does not contradict him who mentions one, unless he has said there was but one, which none of the evangelists has said.

The Considerer thinks there is no harmony among the evangelists, because some speak of the women seeing angels, others call them men. He might have said Luke contradicts himself ; for he calls them both men and angels in different parts of his relation. The truth is, the angels are sometimes called men, because they appeared in the form of men ; for the same reason that Abraham called the angels men, who appeared to him on the plains of Mamre.

4. Matthew and Mark agree in the message sent by the angels to the disciples, that he would “ go before them into Galilee ” Luke has not expressly mentioned the message, but has said nothing inconsistent with it. The angels tell the women, “ He is not here ; he is risen ; remember how he spake unto you ;” exactly agreeable to Matthew’s account, “ He is not here ; he is risen, as he said.” As soon as the women had received this information from the angels, he says they went and told the disciples ; and so says Matthew. The message, then, as delivered by the angels, and whatever else happened at

the sepulchre at the first visit made by the women, stands clear of all difficulties.

But it may be proper here to take notice of the second message given by our Saviour himself, and mentioned by Matthew and John. Matthew gives the second message in the same words with the first; "Tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." John says, tell them, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." It is very probable that the words in Matthew and those in John are parts of the same message; and John, finding the first part reported by the evangelists before him, left it as he found it, adding only the second part. As the first message imported no more than that they should see him again before he left them, and plainly intimated that the time was come to take leave of them, (otherwise what occasion was there to appoint this meeting merely to see him, if he was to continue with them?) this being, I say, the case, the other evangelists mention the first part of the message as including the whole; John adds the latter part to explain and ascertain the meaning. The whole message, then, will stand thus: "Go, tell my disciples to go into Galilee; there shall they see me before I leave this world, and ascend to my Father and your Father," &c. Is not this message all of a piece? Does not one part imply and infer the other? If the Considerer can think otherwise, he has a greater talent (and indeed I think he has) of raising contradictions than any philosopher, either moral or immoral, ever had before him.

The Considerer has further difficulties still. "By Luke," he says, "it appears that the men were at the sepulchre after the angels were gone; but by John, that

they were there before the angels came. Therefore, either the men did not see the angels, or the witnesses do not agree in their evidence about it." What a work is here about nothing! Who told him the men did not see the angels? It is manifest they did not. The first appearance of angels was before Peter and John came; the second was after they were gone. But the Considerer wants a reason to be given why the angels withdrew, as he expresses it, on the men's coming? He may as well inquire why they are withdrawn now? If God thought proper to inform the women of the resurrection by an appearance of angels, and not men, he had his reasons, and wise ones doubtless, though the Considerer cannot see them.

But we have not yet done: Matthew reports that Mary "held Jesus by the feet, and worshipped him;" John, that Jesus said to her, "Touch me not." Here the Considerer is puzzled again; but what offends him I cannot imagine. If Mary had not laid hold of Jesus's feet, he could have had no occasion to say, "Touch me not." These words, therefore, in John, suppose the case to have been as represented by Matthew; and yet the Considerer cannot or will not see it.

From the words, "touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," a suspicion had been raised by Woolston that Christ's body was not a real tangible body; and the author of the Trial had exposed and confuted so weak and groundless a suggestion. "It could not, as he had proved, be inferred from the words, "touch me not;" for thousands say it every day, without giving the least suspicion that their bodies are not capable of being touched: nor from the words, "I am not ascended to my Father;"

for though there is a difficulty in these words, there is no difficulty in seeing that they have no relation to Christ's body, for of his body nothing is said. And what says the Considerer? Why, if the words, "touch me not," says he, did not signify "touch not my body," what did they signify? The author of the Trial, you see, had said that these words, "I am not ascended to my Father," had no relation to Christ's body, and the Considerer represents him as saying that the words "touch me not" had no relation to it. This is the Considerer's method of answering books: because he finds it difficult to answer what the author has said he is resolved to confute what he has not said.

The next appearance of Christ was on the day of the resurrection, to two disciples in their road to Emmaus. Mark has just mentioned this story, xvi. 12; but we are indebted to Luke for the particulars of it. xxiv. 13, &c. One of the two, Luke tells us, was Cleopas; and the other, if we may believe the Considerer, was Simon Peter. Who it really was is of little importance in itself; that it was not Simon Peter, whatever he thinks of the matter, is most evident. Had Peter been present, it is not likely that an inferior disciple would have been the principal spokesman; especially when a part of the conversation turned on Peter himself. It is the less likely, because Peter was probably then at Jerusalem, where, the same evangelist informs us, the eleven were gathered together. xxiv. 24. But to put the matter out of all doubt, when the two disciples returned from Emmaus to the apostles at Jerusalem, they found them discoursing about an appearance of Christ to Simon Peter: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." ver 34. I desire

to know what appearance the evangelist means here? Is it that to the two disciples in the road to Emmaus? Impossible. These disciples had not yet made their report; and it will be too much for the Considerer to say that the eleven knew it by inspiration.

If the reader is desirous to know how the Considerer came by this notion, I think I can inform him. It is founded, if I mistake not, on this very passage, "the Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon," which proves the direct contrary. Had the Considerer argued that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, therefore Simon Peter was the companion of Cleopas, it would have been much more excusable; because, though it would not have proved his conclusion to be true, it would not, as this text does, prove it to be false. The Considerer supposes that to be a report of the two disciples to the eleven, which was in fact a report of the eleven to them, namely, that "the Lord was risen, and had appeared to Simon." Insensible of this blunder, evident as it is, he goes on, and raises this very wise reflection on it, that it "seems as if it did not appear to be the Lord to Cleopas, but to Simon only;" an inference impertinent enough, had this construction of the passage been right; but what can be said of it, when the construction is so manifestly wrong.

His remarks on the story itself are just as groundless as those on the persons of the two disciples. He is, I suppose, offended at it, because there appears to be something miraculous in it. Miracles he treats every where as absurd and impossible, and seems to think that God has no more authority in his own creation than he and I have. Mark says, our Saviour appeared to the two disciples in another form; Luke, that "their eyes were

holden ;” and this the Considerer places to the account of contradictions ; “one evangelist making the cause to be in the object, and the other in the eyes.” It is strange the gentleman will not understand common language. Who does not see that the evangelists meant to express the self-same thing ? If Jesus appeared in another form, their eyes of course were holden that they should not know him : all that the historians mean to intimate is, that there was an impediment which prevented their knowing him. That this might happen either in a natural or supernatural way, the author of the Trial has shown in a manner agreeable to reason and true philosophy, and such as will correspond exactly with the expressions of both evangelists. The Considerer has thought proper to take no notice of this, or none that deserves any answer.

One question, however, he has put in regard to this story, to which I shall give him an answer. The question is this : “Can any good reason be given why Jesus did not discover himself to them by the way, and give them the joy which such discovery would have made ?”

Now the point discussed on the road was whether it was not agreeable to prophecy that Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead. Christ himself undertook to prove this proposition at large from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the argument seemed to have its intended effect. Suppose now he had first made himself known, and then entered on this argument, what would have been the consequence ? Plainly this ; the surprise of seeing one from the dead, and the authority of Christ reasoning from the Scriptures, must have disturbed their judgment, and made them perhaps submit to his interpretation of the prophecies, without considering whether

just or not. The plain reason, therefore, why the discovery was not made sooner is, that he might convince their understandings first on the strength of reason and argument, whilst their minds were yet free from any impression by the event itself, and the irresistible force of Christ's own authority. This reason ought to have great weight with the Considerer, because it is founded on a maxim very much talked of, though very little observed by the gentlemen of his stamp, that all prejudice and prepossession should be excluded in searching after truth.

The appearance of our Saviour at different times to the women and to one or two of the disciples detached from the rest, adds no small weight to the general evidence of the resurrection. But the greatest point singly considered, is his showing himself to the whole body of disciples; eating, drinking, and conversing with them, and giving them an opportunity of being satisfied of the fact at leisure, by all proper methods of trial, and by the variety of evidence that a matter of fact is capable of. Such appearances there are several. The credit of them stands on the united testimony of all the New Testament writers. The four evangelists, the author of the Acts, and Paul, are unanimous in the point. And what has the Considerer opposed to evidence so full and strong? Why he is puzzling himself and his readers with some circumstances of time and place, which he either does not or will not understand; comparing the conciseness of one writer with the copiousness of another, mistaking one appearance for another, and with his usual decency, calling them inconsistencies, improbabilities, absurdities, and contradictions.

Be his objections what they will, the importance of the subject demands what the writer has no claim to, a serious

answer. I shall therefore compare the several writers of the gospel together, as to the manner of stating the fact, and take notice of the Considerer's exceptions as they fall in my way. I would ask then, wherein do Matthew, Mark, and Luke differ as to the point in question? Do they not agree one and all that Christ showed himself to the eleven apostles? This, I think, is granted. And do they not further agree with regard to his discourse, that it was in sum and substance the same? This the Considerer does not deny. Where then lies the difference? Why Matthew, it seems, "disagrees with Luke as to the time and place; for Matthew says it was at a mountain in Galilee; whereas, according to Luke, it was at Jerusalem." The Considerer will excuse me if I take no notice of his pretended difference of time; the matter of place being once explained, the time will rectify itself.

It is allowed then that the place of interview, according to Matthew, was in Galilee; according to Luke, at Jerusalem. What then? Does Matthew say that he met his disciples nowhere but in Galilee, or Luke that he saw them only at Jerusalem? Nothing like it. What hinders then, but that they might meet both in Galilee and Jerusalem? The Considerer thinks that, in the sense of these writers, they met for the first and last time; but here again he concludes, as usual, a great deal too fast, and outruns his evidence. Does either of them declare that it was the first and last time? No. What circumstance then is it, on which the Considerer builds so positive a conclusion? Why it is this; neither of these writers mentions more than one interview with Christ and his apostles, therefore in their sense of the matter there could be but one. Is this the logic that is to prove Christ and

his apostles to be cheats and impostors? "to show mankind the stupid nature of bigotry, and to hold forth the acceptable light of truth?" Is it not amazing that a man should set up for a disturber of religion, who is so poorly provided with that natural logic of common sense which all men are born with?

Had the Considerer had the least inclination to treat the gospel with any fairness, he could not have mistaken so egregiously in this part. "Matthew and Luke," he observes, "disagree in time and place." Is it not a natural consequence that they speak of different appearances? Doubtless it is. But instead of making this use of it, he supposes them, without the least proof for it, to speak of one and the same appearance, and to contradict one another in assigning different times and places.

But that there may not remain any doubt or obscurity on this part of the history, it is proper to take notice of the reason why the message sent from the sepulchre appointed the disciples to go into Galilee to see Jesus, though he, notwithstanding, appeared to them that very night at Jerusalem.

Our blessed Lord, before his crucifixion, told his disciples, "After that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." Matt. xxvi. 32. Mark xiv. 28. This was the evidence he promised to give of his resurrection; and Galilee probably was chosen for the place, because he had spent much time, and had many disciples there who were to have this evidence given them. This then was the public appearance of which our Lord had given notice in his lifetime; whereas the appearances at Jerusalem were not on notice given, and were to the eleven apostles, and to such only as happened to be with them.

The angels therefore, and our Lord himself, in his first appearance, remind the disciples to go into Galilee to receive the evidence he had promised to give them of his resurrection. There was no occasion to mention his intention to see them that night at Jerusalem, of which no expectation had been given.

Now though the appearance at Jerusalem was to the eleven only, yet the message to meet him in Galilee was to all his disciples. Mark makes the promise of this appearance to concern the women as well as the men. The words of the angels to the women are, "there shall ye see him as he said unto you." This then was a public meeting before an assembly warned to be present: and here it was (as there is great reason to suppose) that our Lord appeared to about five hundred brethren at once, according to the relation made by Paul. 1 Cor. xv.

The intermediate appearance to the apostles interfered not with this appointment, which was observed by the apostles who went into Galilee to see Jesus there. This being the appearance foretold, and the evidence specially promised, Matthew passes over all the other appearances, and reports this as the completion of our Lord's prophecy, as the assurance given in his lifetime, repeated by the angels, and by himself at the sepulchre. He mentions the eleven only as travelling into Galilee, in obedience to the command they received; but it is to be collected from his short account that others were present and saw the Lord; for he says of the eleven, "when they saw him they worshipped him"—and adds, "but some doubted;" who can hardly be supposed to be any of those who had seen him before at Jerusalem, and on seeing him now worshipped him.

But it may be proper to consider, under one view, the several appearances of Jesus, and the order of them, as it may be called from the sacred historians.

1. The first, which was at or near the sepulchre, to Mary Magdalene and the other women, has been accounted for at large already.

2. That to the two disciples going to Emmaus was on the day of the resurrection, and is attended with no material difficulty arising from the account as to time or place, or any other circumstances. The Considerer has no fault to find, but that there is something miraculous in the circumstances of it. This too has been considered, as far as was necessary.

3. The same day our Lord appeared to Peter, but whether before he conversed with the two disciples or after, is not certain. It was not till after the two disciples had left Jerusalem, and set out for Emmaus; for it appears in the account they give our Lord of what had come to their knowledge, that they knew nothing of any appearance to Peter; and yet it was before these two disciples returned to Jerusalem, for they found the eleven discoursing of this appearance to Peter. It is doubtful therefore whether of the two last mentioned should be placed first; but they both happened on the day of the resurrection.

4. The next in order is the appearance on the evening of the same day unto the eleven, mentioned by Mark xvi. 14, and Luke xxiv. 36, and John xx. 19. Luke and John plainly enough describe the time of this appearance; and that Mark means the same appearance may be collected from our Saviour upbraiding the eleven, "because they believed not them which had seen him after he was

risen ;” which shows that this was the first time he had appeared to them himself.

5. The appearance to the eleven when Thomas was with them, (John xx. 26,) which was eight days after.

6. The appearance to the seventy disciples at the sea of Tiberias. John xxi. 1.

7. The appearance in Galilee mentioned expressly by Matthew only, but referred to Acts i. 4.

8. The appearance at Jerusalem before his ascension. Acts i. 6. It is plain this appearance was at Jerusalem ; for (ver. 4,) our Lord orders the apostles to tarry at Jerusalem ; and that he met them just before his ascension is evident, (ver. 12,) for they returned to Jerusalem, from whence they had followed him to Mount Olivet, to be witnesses of his ascension.

I omit the relation of appearances given by Paul, (1 Cor. xv.) for his account creates no difficulty.

The time of the first five appearances is clear enough. The sixth, which is the appearance at the sea of Tiberias, was before the command given them not to depart from Jerusalem, for after that command they could not have gone to the sea of Tiberias. The seventh then was that wherein they received the command to stay at Jerusalem, and was the appearance appointed in Galilee by our Lord in his lifetime, and by the angels at the sepulchre. The eighth was the last, and is rightly placed as to the order of time and as to the place ; for it followed the injunction to stay at Jerusalem, and was that wherein our Lord ascended, which was the last appearance to the apostles.

Let us see now whether by this light we can account for the manner in which the evangelists relate these appearances. If you read Matthew by himself, you have an

account of one appearance only. The same may be said with respect to Mark and Luke, who both seem to speak of the same appearance, but manifestly a different one from that of Matthew, which was in Galilee; whereas the other was at Jerusalem. How comes it now to pass that these evangelists mention each of them but one appearance, if there were indeed so many more? The truth is, that the evangelists did not write full histories of our Saviour's life, but short annals or commentaries; and sometimes contracted into one discourse or narration, things relating to the same matter, though spoken or done at different times. What John says of his own gospel, "Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book," John xx. 30, may be said very fairly of the rest. The words of John follow immediately after the account he has given of the appearances to the disciples after the resurrection, and probably referred to the omission in his gospel of many other appearances made to the disciples.

Now, though Matthew reports only the appearance in Galilee, and Mark and Luke seem to report only that on the day of the resurrection at Jerusalem; yet Mark has given a plain intimation of that in Galilee, by the message from the angels to the disciples; and John has reported and distinguished three appearances, and given notice that there were others not written in his book.

Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, has referred to several appearances, telling us that "Jesus showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts i. 3. You have here a concise general account of our Lord's appearing to his

disciples, and of the subject-matter of his discourses to them at those times, that he spoke "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." After this general account he mentions two distinct appearances, which were necessary to be taken notice of, to introduce the account he had to give of the ascension. The first is that wherein he orders them to "tarry at Jerusalem;" the second is that at Jerusalem, when he took leave of them and ascended. The first of these appearances is remarkably introduced, verse 4, "and being assembled together with them;" the original is, *και συναλιζόμενος*: *supplly* αὐτοῖς; which words are properly to be rendered, "and having assembled them together."\* The other appearances recorded, seem to be accidental, by our Lord's coming in when the eleven were met together; but this is spoken of as a meeting summoned by himself, and was, I doubt not, that meeting which he had appointed the day of his resurrection, by the message sent to his disciples by the angels and by himself, and is the very same meeting in Galilee mentioned by Matthew. At this meeting, Luke says, the disciples received the order to tarry at Jerusalem; after which they could not travel into Galilee as they were commanded, and consequently this appearance was itself the appearance at Galilee, or happened after it, which there is no reason to think.

The disciples being thus ordered to Jerusalem, repair thither. "When they, therefore, were come together, they asked him, Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ver. 6. This question was not asked at the assembling mentioned, ver. 4, which is clearly distinct from that mentioned, ver. 6, for what occasion was there to

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\* Vide Grotium in loc.

mention again their coming together, after we had been just told they were together? Had it been said, "then they asked," &c., it would have been a continuation of the discourse with the same assembly; but when their meeting together is so distinctly mentioned, it shows it to be another and a different meeting, after the disciples were got together at Jerusalem.

At this meeting our Lord assured them they should receive power by the coming of the Holy Ghost, then led them to Bethany, or Mount Olivet, and in their presence ascended.

Let us examine now how far these particular accounts will enable us to adjust the abridged narration of our Saviour's appearances in the first three evangelists. The fullest is that of Luke; he mentions our Lord's appearing to the eleven, and those with them on the evening of the resurrection. But it is manifest, under that appearance, he brought together the sum of what was done and said by our Saviour, during his abode on earth after the resurrection. For he begins to speak of his appearing the day of the resurrection, xxiv. 38, and continues his narration to the ascension. ver. 51. He tells us himself in the Acts, that there were forty days between the resurrection and ascension. It is undeniable then that his account in the gospel is an abridged account of what passed in our Lord's meeting his disciples during that time; and this clearly appears to be the case by comparing his abridged account with the more particular accounts already mentioned.

Luke xxiv. from verse 36 to 40 inclusive, you have the same account of what passed at the first appearance which John gives.	}	John xx. 19. 20.
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At verse 49 you have what passed at the meeting in Galilee, mentioned by Matthew and Luke. } Matt. xxviii. 16, &c. Acts i. 4.

At verse 50, 51, you have what passed at the last meeting at Jerusalem, before the ascension mentioned in the Acts, and referred to in Mark. } Acts i. 6—9. Mark xvi. 19.

Luke says that our Lord came to the eleven just as the two disciples had reported what had passed in the journey to Emmaus; and as our Lord expounded to them the Scriptures and ate with them, so now he gives the same evidence and the same exposition of the Scriptures to the rest: and surely it was a natural thing to take up the same discourse, and open the understanding of the eleven, as he had opened the understanding of the two before, and to give them the same evidence of the reality of his resurrection; and this takes up from verse 41 to 48.

Mark's narration is shorter than Luke's, but plainly of the same kind: he begins with an account of our Saviour's appearing, as Luke does, xvi. 14, and ends with his ascension, verse 19.

But much abridged as these accounts are, one material thing there is, which none of the writers has omitted, namely, the commission then given to the apostles "to teach all nations," and in consequence of it a promise of power and assistance from above.\* Luke says, Acts i. 3, that the subject of his discourses to his disciples was "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." These things are transmitted to us by every writer; and though none has mentioned every particular appearance, yet the

\* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 47—49. John xx. 21, 22.

sum of what was said at all the appearances is faithfully recorded by all.

I have stated this part of our Saviour's history for the sake of those who have patience and attention enough to consider it; and I hope such may find some light and satisfaction from what has been said. But with regard not only to this, but to all other parts of the history, it may be proper to observe, that the number of writers makes amends for the deficiencies of any one. The Christian has a large field to range in; he is not to seek his faith in one evangelist, but in all. In all together he is sure to find a satisfactory account of his Master's life and doctrine; abundantly sufficient to direct his judgment, to convince his understanding, and to give him the satisfaction that is proper for a rational being.

It is to no purpose to go over the Considerer's objections to this part of the history. All he has said will, by comparing it with the foregoing account, be found to be built on his own mistakes. Some of them seem to be wilful; he supposes Matthew and Mark, who report our Lord's order to meet him in Galilee, to be contradicted by Luke, who reports an order to them not to depart from Jerusalem. He could not, I think, but see that these were different orders, given at different times, and on different occasions. But be it to himself.

His objections to the relation given of the ascension of Jesus are of the same kind, and they will be easily accounted for by considering the series of the transactions above.

It is scarce worth while to observe, because it is obvious to the most indifferent reader, that after the revolt of Judas, *the eleven* was the current style for the whole col-

lege of apostles; and after the call of Matthias to the apostolate, they were again called *the twelve*. In virtue of this style, a general meeting of the apostles is called a meeting of *the eleven*, or of *the twelve*, though one or more may happen to be absent. This is agreeable to both ancient and modern usage in the case of senates, councils, and the like. Hence it is that Luke says, xxiv. 20, "*the eleven* were gathered together," though it appears by John xx. 24, that Thomas was absent. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 5, calls it a meeting of *the twelve*, because he was not converted till after the election of Matthias, when that came again to be the usual style. Had the Considerer had sense enough to have seen this, (and a very little would have been sufficient for the purpose,) he might have spared himself the trouble and the shame of charging John, Luke, and Paul, with contradicting one another. But he might perhaps hope that his readers would excuse a small blunder, for the sake of some beauties that rise out of it; such as his query with regard to Paul's account, "whether Judas was there to make up the number?" and his excuse for the apostle, that "perhaps he had forgotten that one of them was fallen asleep:" conceits which he is so fond of, that they have passed the censure of his and his friend's second thoughts.

The story which John has left us of Thomas is so strong a proof of the resurrection of Christ, and so remarkable an evidence of the reality of his body, that I do not wonder to find the Considerer displeased with it. He has attacked it with a double portion of the spirit of folly and impiety, and has not, that I can find, dropped anything that carries the face of an objection. He thinks his infidelity very extraordinary, because he would not believe that Jesus

was risen from the dead, except he saw and felt the wounds that caused his death, and asks if these were better to be known than the form of his person, which they had so often seen. This, I am afraid, carries an implication with it which the Considerer was not aware of; that Thomas had no reason to be so nice and scrupulous; that the evidence of sight and the well known idea of his face and person were sufficient for conviction. Truth, I find, will sometimes obtrude itself on a man, even against his thoughts and inclinations. As to the wounds that caused his death, there is not, that I can find, one word about wounds in this whole story. The τύπος τῶν ἡλῶν, the print of the nails, or the scar that was left after the wounds were cured, is two or three times repeated, but nothing further. Why then does the Considerer talk of wounds? Why, to introduce the very wise question: "Is it to be supposed that the power which raised him to life, did not cure those wounds?" It is with just as little meaning that he asks, whether "another person, who might have a mind to deceive, could not make scars?" The reader, I believe, will not expect to have a formal confutation of such impertinent and senseless suggestions; barely reciting them is exposing them effectually.

Much about the same size with these is another exception he makes to this story. Because the wound in the side is mentioned only by John, he thinks Thomas and the other apostles knew nothing of the matter—as if so extraordinary a circumstance was likely to be a secret to any of them, and as if Thomas's direct appeal to this circumstance was not a demonstration that it was no secret to him. I leave it with the reader, without any further answer, as one instance amongst a thousand, of

the folly and absurdity into which a man is sure to be betrayed when the unclean spirit of singularity has once seized him. The Considerer has said something more of this piece of history, but it is so like the sample already given, that it would be an affront to the reader to take any further notice of it.

After having gone through his proofs, against the credit of the gospel history, the Considerer returns to the "Trial of the Witnesses." The author of the Trial had observed that in all cases of consequence men take care to make choice of proper unexceptionable witnesses; that the same care was taken in the resurrection, and then adds, "How comes it to pass, then, that the very thing which shuts out all suspicion in other cases, should, in this case only, be of all others the most suspicious thing itself?" The Considerer answers, "Because this case, of all others, is the most uncommon." Is that a reason why it should not be supported by the best evidence that human wisdom is able to think of in the most material cases? He goes on: "is it not absurd that the meanest witnesses should be picked and culled out for the best and greatest affairs?" What he intends by the meanest I know not. Men may surely be good witnesses without having great estates, and be able to report what they see with their eyes, without being philosophers: as far, then, as the truth of the resurrection depended on the evidence of sense, the apostles were duly qualified. But how comes he to lay such stress on their meanness? Did their meanness stand in the way of the evidence, which arose from the great powers with which they were endowed from above? Consider their natural and supernatural qualifications, they were in every respect proper witnesses; take these qualifications to-

gether, and they were witnesses without exception. But the Considerer thinks the apostles were "interested in the affair, and that half-a-dozen watchmen would have been better than a dozen apostles." I would fain know what sort of witnesses he requires. Suppose half a dozen watchmen had seen and believed the resurrection, I doubt their being believers would have been, in his way of reckoning, an objection; he would have told us they expected commissions in the Messiah's army. Would he then have evidence from unbelievers? A witness, who does not believe the truth of what he affirms, is a mere cheat. Nobody therefore could be a witness to the resurrection but a believer; and such a one he esteems to be interested. But this is an absurd objection, because it is an objection to every honest witness that ever lived; for every honest witness believes the truth of what he says. If he means to charge the apostles with views or hopes of temporal advantage to themselves, he shows himself to be a mere stranger to the history of the Church, or wilfully imposes on his ignorant readers. How much the apostles endured and suffered for the testimony of the truth; what havoc was made among the converts to Christianity by persecution on persecution for three hundred years together, until the empire became Christian, is as notorious as any part of history; and he may as well, and with as much truth, deny that there were any heathen emperors of Rome, as that the apostles and first Christians were afflicted, tormented, and put to cruel deaths by them.

In the next page the Considerer repeats the old objection, "that Jesus did not show himself to the Jews after his resurrection." This plea had been examined, and answered in the Trial; and since the Considerer has

thought fit to pass over in silence what he found there, I must refer the reader to the Trial itself for an answer to this old objection. And if he wants further satisfaction, I recommend to him a little piece written on this point only, and published in 1730.\* The Considerer wonders, "that an extraordinary action, highly necessary to be known to mankind, should be so secretly done, that no man saw it; and that Jesus should require men to believe his disciples rather than their own senses." When so many saw him dead, and so many saw and conversed with him after he arose from the grave, it is surprising to hear this assertion, that no man saw the resurrection. Is anything more wanting to complete a sensible proof of a resurrection, than to see a man dead and buried and to see him alive again? But it seems the Jews could not believe the disciples in the report they made of the resurrection, without contradicting their own senses. They had then, in this writer's opinion, the evidence of sense against the truth of the resurrection. This is great news, and it is a pity this evidence was not produced; it would have been material to inform us which of their senses afforded that evidence; and by what means he came to know this piece of evidence which the Jews had, and which the world never heard of before, and which probably they will never hear of again.

The author of the Trial had taken notice of our Saviour's prediction just before his death, that the Jews should see him no more, till they said, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Luke xiii. 35;

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\* "An impartial Examination and full Confutation of the Argument, &c., against the truth of our Saviour's Resurrection, viz., that he appeared only to the disciples."

and then added, "The Jews were not in this disposition after the resurrection, nor are they in it yet." The Considerer says that "Jesus himself found them in that disposition before his death;" and he refers for proof of this bold assertion to Luke xix. 38. The case there is this; on our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, the multitude of disciples cried, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." This was the language of the disciples only, and the Considerer does not think all the Jews were disciples. How comes he then to abuse the Scripture and his reader so grossly, as to quote this passage as a proof of the disposition of the Jews? Did he not read in the very next verse that the Pharisees called on Christ "to rebuke the disciples" for what they said! How could he be so shameless as to give this for evidence, that the Jews were in a good disposition, which proves so undeniably that they were in a bad one?

The author of the trial observed, that notwithstanding the story propagated among the people, that the disciples stole the body, yet in all the persecutions raised against them on several pretences, as of heresy, sedition, &c., they never were charged with any fraud in the resurrection. He observed too that the Christian faith, being grounded on the truth of the resurrection as the basis and foundation of the whole, "the thing for which they suffered was the truth of the resurrection." "So then," says this smart writer, "the chief priests never so much as charged the apostles with any fraud in the resurrection, but they put them to death because they believed it."

I wish this writer loved trifling less, or that I liked it better, for at present it is too hard work to follow him. But I submit, and desire him to say whether every man

that does not believe the story of the stealing the body by the disciples, must necessarily believe the resurrection ; if not, then surely the chief priests might, consistently with their notions, persecute the apostles for preaching the resurrection, though they did not charge them with stealing the body, or any fraud in contriving the resurrection.

The evidence of the Spirit in the signs and wonders wrought by the disciples in confirmation of the truth of their doctrine, was insisted on in the Trial ; and I refer the reader to it, since the Considerer has made no reply to it. He says, "in this age we have almost lost it, except amongst the disciples of the inspired Mr. Whitefield, who has blown up a new light of it—and has ventilated it by his bellows." What can be done with this profane buffoonery ! I am sorry to see it ; and if the author is not quite obdurate, I wish he may come to such a temper of mind as to be sorry for it too.

When the apostles were brought before the chief priests and the council of the Jews, and preached to them the resurrection, Gamaliel, one of the council, said, "If this be the work of men, it will come to nought ; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. "Acts v. 38, 39. From this passage the author of the Trial argued that Gamaliel could not possibly have said this, or the council heard it with patience, if they had believed the resurrection a cheat, and that the disciples had stolen the body. The argument was too strong for the Considerer, and therefore he questions the truth of Gamaliel's uttering these words ; and for fear that should not be sufficient, he says, "Gamaliel might be so much a philosopher, as well as a scholar, to dissuade them from rigid persecution." How his

philosophical notion of persecution comes in here is hard to say; one would think he was dreaming of persecution and talking in his sleep. The question is, how Gamaliel could make the supposition that the resurrection might be the work of God, if he knew it to be the fraud and cheat of men? What has his notion of persecution to do here? Besides, if Gamaliel knew the apostles to be cheats, would his philosophy about persecution incline him to spare cheats, who (if they were cheats) were guilty of forgery and perjury, and every other crime necessary to carry on such a fraud?

The case of Agrippa, and the argument from it in the Trial, is much of the same kind. The Considerer supposes Agrippa to mean that Paul was mad, and says, "he had told Paul before, he was a madman." Agrippa never did tell Paul so. The Considerer, I suppose, mistook Agrippa for Festus. It was natural for the Roman soldier, who knew nothing of the Jewish prophets, when he heard Paul appealing to them, to say, "much learning had made him mad," Acts xxvi. 24; but to put these words into Agrippa's mouth, who was bred up in a regard to the prophets, is quite out of character, as well as false in fact.

We have now gone through the Considerer's exceptions to the evidence of the resurrection, and to the defence of that evidence in the Trial of the Witnesses: but the business is not yet over. The Considerer has one argument still in reserve, which, were there anything in it, would strike at the credit of revelation in general. He had given his opinion of miracles incidentally in several parts of his book, but at the conclusion he endeavours to support it at large. He thinks, "that miracles of any kind are impossible and exclude all evidence; that they

are an absurdity to common sense and understanding ; that they are inconsistent with the reason of man and nature of things ; that they contradict all that mankind calls truth and reason ; that they are contrary to the experience and reason of all mankind, and utterly impossible.”

I shall discuss this point with him, and see what reason he has thus to dogmatize in opposition to the general opinion of all mankind, in all ages of the world.

For the possibility of the resurrection, I must do the reader the justice once more to refer him to the Trial of the Witnesses ; where he will find this point stated and explained in such a manner that no man, that is less a sceptic than the Considerer, can have any doubt about it. The Considerer has made a show of answering this part of the Trial, without stating the author's argument, without seeming to understand one word of the scope of it, and without citing one sentence fairly. So far as that author is concerned, it is sufficient to say in his own words, what is the real truth, “ that he has said nothing on this occasion but what any man who never saw ice might say against a hundred honest witnesses, who assert that water turns to ice in cold climates.”

Of the reason and possibility of miracles in general, I shall now beg leave to talk with him. He is very frank in declaring his opinion with regard to this point, and I have laid it before the reader in his own words. Nothing can well be stronger than the language in which he has expressed it. He seems plainly to declare that miracles are not only impossible in a moral, but in a physical sense ; that they are not only inconsistent with the moral attributes of God, but impossible even to his power.

But be this as it will. I shall take the arguments as

he himself has stated them, and examine them by the rules of common language and common sense. He has indeed so involved himself in words, that when he has a meaning, it is not easy to come at it. Reason, right reason, truth, and the nature of things, are words of great weight in the apprehensions of most men. Let us see what place they hold in the Considerer's estimation. "What conceptions any man frames to himself of the course of nature from his own experience and observation, are not prejudices and imaginations, but what sense and reason are concerned about. This is the very foundation of that right reason, which can never contradict the truth of things." In the first edition it stands thus: "this is the very foundation of right reason; and reason formed from hence can never contradict the truth of things."

If every man's notion of the course of nature is the very foundation, &c. of right reason, then right reason varies as much as people's notions of the course of nature. It is then right reason that says the sun goes round the earth, for this the vulgar reckon to be the course of nature. It is right reason also, to say the sun is fixed, and the planets move round him; for this appears from the experience and observation of astronomers to be the course of nature. But how absurd is it to make right reason depend on the notions which men entertain of the course of nature; when it is the very office and business of reason to rectify the errors which men perpetually fall into, in the judgments they make in this case. Experience and observation show that a cane half in the water and half out is crooked; but reason, on the principle of true science, informs us otherwise. Here then experience and observation are on one side, and reason on the other;

and the same conclusion holds true in a thousand instances, and every instance indeed where men make a wrong judgment of what they see. And the fault in this case does not lie in the experience and observation, but in the reasoning on them. Thus men do not err in their observation when they say that water never grows solid in hot climates; but they err in reasoning on this observation, and concluding that the case can never be otherwise. That men die and come not to life again here, is a true observation; but will this observation prove that it can never be otherwise? We see by observation the effects of the course of nature, but this course of nature depends on causes removed out of our sight. Observation shows how these causes operate generally, but cannot show that they are immutable, and must operate invariably in every instance.

But let us see how he reasons the point of miracles. Take the proposition as it stands, with the reason annexed. "Things asserted which are contrary to the experience and reason of all mankind, and what they know of the law and usual course of nature, (that is, miracles,) are to the common sense and understanding of man utterly impossible." We must rectify the proposition before we come to the reason. In the first part, which is intended as a description of miracles, the Considerer assumes too much; a miracle indeed is contrary to common experience and the usual course of nature, but why contrary to reason? If by reason he means right reason or truth, it is supposing the very thing in question. If he means the faculty of reason, it will come to the same thing, supposing that faculty to be rightly used, otherwise it is nothing to the purpose.

With the Considerer's leave, then, I shall expunge the word "reason," (which will not injure the argument,) and the proposition will stand thus: "things asserted, which are contrary to the experience of all mankind, and to what they know of the laws and usual course of nature, (that is, miracles,) are, to the common sense and understanding of men, utterly impossible." Now comes the reason; "because such assertions contradict all men's notions of such laws that are known by experience." That is to say, things contrary to experience are impossible, because they are contrary to experience; or things contrary to what men know of the laws of nature are impossible, because they are contrary to what men know of the laws of nature. This is what the Considerer calls giving a reason.

But I cannot yet part with the proposition. Miracles, it seems, "are to the common sense and understanding of men impossible." How are we to understand this expression? Does he mean impossible to the reason of men, or impossible to the conceptions of men? Impossible to the reason of men they are not, because the reason of man tells him there is a being who originally gave laws to matter, and regulates the course of nature; and consequently who can, if he pleases, alter or suspend those laws, and change the course of nature. If he means that miracles are impossible to the conceptions of men, it is granted: that is, it is granted that men do not conceive how they are wrought; they do not conceive how or in what manner a dead body is raised to life, nor how or in what manner a word only should give a blind man sight. In this sense the Considerer's proposition may be true, but then it is nothing to his purpose. Miracles are in-

conceivable ; yes, and so are many things that happen every day, which we do not reckon miraculous. It is inconceivable how matter acts on matter, either in gravitation, attraction, magnetism, or in any other well known operation ; but we do not therefore give the lie to our senses, and say it does not act, because we cannot conceive how it acts. So that if the Considerer means that miracles are impossible to the reason of men, it is evidently false ; if he means that they are impossible to the conceptions of men, it may be true, but is quite beside his purpose.

But let us see how this point is argued in the next page. Perhaps we shall meet with a better reason there. "To believe it possible, (that is, for a dead body to rise again,) contradicts this maxim, 'that nature is steady and uniform in her operations.'" Nature, or the laws of nature, would doubtless, when not controlled by the author of nature, operate steadily and uniformly. A lion would produce a lion, an acorn an oak : matter would continue to gravitate, human beings to die, and dead bodies to mix with the earth, and not come to life again. What does the maxim prove then ? Only that a dead body cannot come to life again in the natural way. Nobody disputes this with the Considerer. The question is, whether it may not be done in a supernatural way ; whether the great Author of nature, whenever he thinks it convenient, cannot supersede or suspend the general laws of nature. Will the Considerer deny this ? If he believes a God and a providence as he professes to do, he cannot. Well ; but it contradicts the aforesaid maxim, because "one miracle or action done contrary to her (that is, nature's) laws, contradicts all her regular springs and movements, and

all that mankind calls truth and reason." How does such an action contradict all nature's uniform movements? Does it imply that her movements are not uniform when uncontrolled? Nothing like it. Does it imply that they are not uniform in that particular instance, that is, that her movements in that instance are contrary to the general course of nature? Most certainly it does, for it is of the essence of a miracle to be contrary to the general course of nature. What then? This proves nothing: it is only giving the thing in dispute as a reason against itself. But let us hear the other part of the reason: "A miracle contradicts all that mankind calls truth and reason." How does this appear? Why, you must take the Considerer's word for it. But does he not know that it is the very thing in question? The inquiry is, whether miracles are contrary to reason. The Considerer undertakes to prove that they are; and how does he prove it? Why thus: miracles are contrary to reason, because they contradict this maxim, that nature is steady and uniform in her operations. And how do they contradict this maxim? Why, because "they contradict what mankind calls truth and reason." Is not this saying that miracles are contrary to reason, because they are contrary to reason?

"A miracle," the Considerer says, "contradicts all that mankind calls truth and reason." Let us try it in a particular instance. We read in the gospel that our Saviour walked on the water. What truth or what reason does this contradict? It is a well-known truth that all bodies gravitate, and it is another that human bodies will sink in fluids. Does it contradict either or both these truths? Surely not. All bodies continue to gravitate, and human bodies to sink in fluids, as they did before; and Christ's

own body followed the law of gravitation, that particular case only excepted. All that this fact supposes is, that there is a power in nature that can suspend the laws of gravity, or change fluids into solids. If this is contradicting truth, let the Considerer show it.

It is an unwelcome and an unprofitable task to deal with an author who gives words only for arguments. By the specimen I have given of this author's reasoning on the natural possibility of miracles, the reader, I believe, will find this to be the case here. He goes on to show that they are impossible in a moral view; that, supposing God to have power over his own works, or, as he expresses it, "that he can do things contrary to nature, there is no reason that he ever did or will do it." It is, he thinks, contrary to the perfection of his nature, to his unchangeableness, his wisdom, his justice, and his goodness. Let us see how he proves it.

"Those," says he, "who found religion on extraordinary pretensions, say that nature, which is the offspring of God, is degenerate and deficient." It is not easy to deal with an author who uses terms so equivocally, that one can come at his meaning only by guess. It is difficult to say what we are to understand by *nature*. If by nature the Considerer means, what he seems most commonly to understand by it, the constitution of the material world, the proposition is evidently false: extraordinary pretensions do not imply that nature in this sense is deficient, nor indeed do they imply anything with regard to nature; for what connection is there between the extraordinary pretensions of the Christian religion, and the perfection of the material world? When our Lord, for instance, by a word, caused the fig-tree to wither, did it

suppose any deficiency in the constitution of vegetables? No more than if the tree had been felled by an axe. Whatever the constitution of vegetables, or whatever the constitution of the material world be, such actions declare nothing either as to their perfection or imperfection; they only declare that the God of nature has authority over his own workmanship.

But perhaps by *nature* the Considerer means human nature, or the moral nature of man. Let us try the proposition in this sense. "Those who found religion on extraordinary pretensions, say that human nature, which is the offspring of God, is deficient." Man is subject to error and corruption and in this sense human nature may well be said to be deficient, whether God interposes or not. Whether religion be founded on extraordinary pretensions or not, human nature is still deficient; if this be an objection under revealed religion, it is an objection under natural religion too. When a youth is taught to read and to write; when he is instructed in religion and the sciences; does it not imply that human nature wants help, and is in itself deficient? And what does it imply more when God vouchsafes to help and assist it? It is very improper, it is false to say the offspring of God or the work of God is deficient; but it is not improper to say that man is imperfect or deficient. The truth is, the sense of the word *deficient* is different in one case from what it is in the other. God's works are said to be perfect in this particular view, that they are adapted to the end for which they were designed; and yet man, or any other created being, is imperfect or deficient, when compared with a greater being, and especially when compared with the greatest of all beings.

The Considerer has another argument, which bears a near resemblance to this, and is as follows: "The whole production of God's wisdom, goodness, and power, must be a perfect work; therefore, cannot be better. If God be a perfect being, his works are perfect, and cannot be mended." The Considerer talks sometimes of Providence; I should be glad to know what is his notion of Providence. He seems to suppose that God formed the universe as a vast machine, with the several orders of beings in it, and then, like the Epicurean deities, left it to shift for itself, without concerning himself at all about it. If there be such a thing as Providence, which the Considerer himself confesses, if God ever interposes in his own creation, it must be to mend something, though not to mend his own original work. It is not proper to say, that God's work is mended by revelation, as the Considerer supposes, in any other sense than it is mended by a good schoolmaster, or an able professor of the sciences. Revelation indeed mends or improves men; that is, it furnishes them with greater and better lights than mere reason could; but it alters not the nature and constitution of men, it affects not the original workmanship of God.

But further: the material world is (like all machines of human contrivance) governed by necessary laws, and the constitution of it cannot be altered by any power within itself. But it is not so in the moral world. Man was originally endued with properties of a different kind from those of matter. He has a power over his own actions, a power of improving or depraving his moral nature. One man makes the proper improvement of the powers which nature gave him, another abuses them. One nation or one age makes high advances in knowledge and virtue,

another is sunk in ignorance and corruption. If such enormities are the natural consequences of the original constitution of man, what reason is there to exclude Providence from regulating and correcting them? If the system of man is to be considered under the notion of one great machine, it must be considered as a machine that has a power within itself of putting itself out of order; and if it should be out of order, as from the nature of its several springs and wheels it may well be supposed to be, where is the impropriety of the great Artificer interposing and correcting it? If man has a power of choosing good or evil, he may choose the latter; if he has faculties for discovering truth, he may notwithstanding neglect it, he may overlook or mistake it: it is easy to see what room here is for error and corruption. So that, however perfect the original work was, it may in time, from the nature of the thing, want mending.

“Natural powers,” the Considerer says, “are fit to answer all the ends of religion, therefore, supernatural powers are needless.” What he means by answering the ends of religion he tells you in what follows: “To teach the most excellent morals, with a reasonable belief of one God and providence.” I shall not dispute with the Considerer how far some men may advance on the strength of mere reason: some have no doubt gone great lengths; but man, the Considerer knows, is not infallible. He may embrace error under the notion of truth, and teach it as such; and the corruption may spread and become general. What is to be done in this case? The Considerer seems to think that a man of honesty and understanding would be well able to cure his disorder without supernatural endowments. I am not of this opinion; inveterate error is

not to be expelled so easily ; human reason and human authority, especially when it comes to be general, do not seem to be a match for it. If we may reason from fact, there is nothing more sure than this. There were, no doubt, some men of honesty and understanding in the heathen world ; but what progress did they make in reforming it ? How far did they advance in removing that universal corruption with which it is overrun ? Take a view of paganism from the time of Socrates to the time of Christ, the most enlightened period of antiquity, and see what progress truth hath made. What were the public institutions of religion but the worst and grossest superstition and impiety ? So much of truth as had been discovered was confined to the few ; and if haply they might chance to keep it, it was not likely to get any further. Every national religion was looked on as the dictates of the gods, and forbidden to be altered by man ; so that truth was, as it were, prohibited by law. How, then, was it to be recovered, with the civil power and the prejudices and passions of mankind against it ? Let the Considerer show, if he can, that a man of honesty and understanding, without any supernatural powers, would be equal to this work.

But the Considerer thinks “a power of working miracles is contrary to the unchangeableness of God ;” for “the same causes,” he says, “must always produce the same effects.” His reason, if he intended it as a reason, is a very unlucky one. I cannot see the most distant relation between the premises and the conclusion. The same causes produce the same effects. Right ! but in miracles a new cause is introduced ; and if his argument proves anything, it proves that natural causes will not

produce miracles ; but do we ascribe miracles to natural causes ? He goes on : “ But miracles are urged to prove a change in the will of God ; that is, impossible things are urged to prove an impossibility.” According to the Considerer, it seems it is a principle, agreed on by both believers, and unbelievers, that miracles are used to prove a change in the will of God. If you grant him this, and admit, too, that miracles are impossible, he will draw this notable conclusion, that impossibilities are urged to prove an impossibility.

But suppose neither of them is granted, what will become of his conclusion ? The reader has already seen his reasons, if they may be called reasons, for thinking miracles to be impossible. But what pretence has he to say that miracles are urged to prove a change in the will of God ? Where or when were they ever urged to this purpose ? or how indeed do they prove it ? The Considerer is entirely silent as to all these points, and yet he goes on reasoning on the supposition of miracles proving a change, nay, of their being allowed to prove a change, in the will of God.

The Considerer has puzzled himself unaccountably with the immutability of God, than which there is not one attribute in the divine nature more clear and precise. It is his being and perfections that are immutable, and not his actions, unless you will suppose men and all other beings immutable too. His actions are always the same when circumstances are the same ; but what sense is there in supposing that immutable wisdom must act in all cases, how different soever, in the same way ? The counsels of Providence are directed by unerring wisdom ; but the same wisdom prescribes different measures on different

occasions. Miracles, of themselves, can be no proof that God's counsels are mutable, either with respect to the natural, or the moral world ; not with respect to the natural, because suspending some one law of matter to serve some moral purpose, is no proof that the counsel of God is changed with regard to the general laws and constitution of matter ; not in the moral, because miracles may, for anything that appears to the contrary, be useful to answer some moral end, and to serve the great purposes of Providence in some cases and not in others.

This the Considerer is not willing to allow ; for if miracles were ever necessary, they must, in his judgment, be always necessary.

The Considerer has so good a talent at reasoning, that I cannot refuse him and the reader the justice of producing his argument, as he himself has stated it. "If miracles were ever necessary, whether the divine or human nature, or the nature of things, be *changeable or unchangeable*, they must be always necessary. For if God ever wrought miracles to be the proof of the knowledge of his will, he will always pursue the same methods, *if he is an unchangeable being.*" That is to say "the proposition is true, whether God be changeable or not, for a reason which expressly supposes him to be unchangeable." The Considerer has generally the fortune to have his positions and his reasons hang very ill together. But let us examine the latter part of the argument by itself, and see what there is in it. "God is an unchangeable being ; therefore, if he ever wrought miracles as a proof of his will, he will always pursue the same method." It is allowed that God is an unchangeable being. It follows from thence that his conduct will always be the same in

the same state of things; if he works miracles in one case, he will do it again whenever the same case, with all its circumstances, returns. But if he does it when the state of mankind requires it, it does not follow that he will do it when the state of mankind does not require it. Let the Considerer show that it cannot be expedient for mankind at one time, and not at another. Till he can prove this, he proves nothing. Let us try his reasoning in a common case. Should the subjects of some great prince rise in arms against him, and should he quiet them by offering a general pardon without punishing their crime; will it follow that he ought to pursue the same method in every rebellion? And will it follow that his counsels are mutable if he does not? The Considerer himself will not have the folly to assert it. Lenity may be necessary at one time, and severity at another; and each of these measures, though not only different, but opposite, may be the effect of the same wisdom and prudence.

But if "God has wrought wonders in one generation and not another," it seems, "he must be a partial being." The Considerer does not know what he is about when he charges God with partiality. According to his little view of things, Providence may be accused as partial in many other instances, and with more appearance of reason than in this. Why does he not complain that one man has greater natural endowments than another, that he is superior in wealth, in dignity, in power, or whatever else is esteemed great and illustrious? If that is to be looked on as partiality which the Considerer judges to be such, I leave him to reflect where his opinion will terminate. He says, "that miracles are equally necessary to all people, and therefore if God grants them to one generation

and not another, he is a partial being." If bold assertions were to be admitted as proofs, there is nothing which the Considerer is not capable of proving. Let him prove (instead of asserting) that miracles are equally necessary in all ages, and then it will be time to talk with him. Here is a maxim which the Considerer himself allows to be a just one, that Providence does nothing in vain. If, then, a series of wonders are wrought in one age, why may not the memory of them be duly preserved for the benefit of succeeding ages? And if they are so preserved, would not repeating them in succeeding ages be unnecessary? When error and corruption have been once conquered, and the true religion established by the help of miracles, why are not such miracles, when recorded by proper hands, sufficient to support and preserve it? The Considerer calls on us to show "what lasting monuments we have of them, by which they may be clearly evidenced, and may appear true against all contradiction." He needs not to go to the place in which they were wrought, where only he thinks such monuments are to be found. They are much nearer home than he is willing to believe: they are already in his own hands, if he knew how to use them and set a just value on them. The Gospels are the monuments wherein those miracles are recorded, and he must prove them to be all a forgery, before he can with reason complain for want of authentic monuments; which he will find it no easy matter to do, against the testimony of all antiquity, of the enemies of Christianity as well as its friends.

I have now gone through the material things, and to my own sorrow many immaterial things, in the Considerer's book. When the book first appeared, it seemed to require

no answer : and to those who can judge of the weight of arguments, it required none. But when it came into the hands of those who were not able to see how they were imposed on, the case was altered. For their sakes this answer was prepared, and is now published. One thing at least they may learn from these papers, not to trust a man who abuses religion out of love to truth. It is not Scripture he attacks, whatever he pretends, but Scripture distorted and perverted. Look over the pretended Answer to the Trial ; where is there an argument of any weight that is built on a true representation of Scripture ? I will not say that all his mistakes of this kind are wilful ; many of them, I am afraid, are so. But I judge him not.

THE END.













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